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The principles of Christian
philosophy

1846



THE
PRINCIPLES
OF
CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY,
CONTAINING THE
DOCTRINES, DUTIES, ADMONITIONS, AND CONSOLATIONS
OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

✓
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ETC. ETC.

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TO THE
MEMORY OF THE
REVEREND JOHN BURNS, D.D.,
MINISTER OF THE BARONY PARISH OF GLASGOW,
AND THE
VENERABLE FATHER OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,
WHO DIED IN THE NINETY-SIXTH YEAR OF HIS AGE,
THE FOLLOWING PAGES
ARE MOST AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED
BY HIS SON.

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PRINCIPLES

OF

CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY.

CHAPTER I.

MAN IS CREATED FOR A FUTURE STATE.

WHILST the reader is perusing this sentence, a mortal is quitting life, and closing for ever his connexion with all that the world contains.* Time, like an overflowing flood, is continually sweeping away multitudes from the earth. The young and the gay, the old and the wretched, are alike involved in the desolation. The hand which writes, and the eye which reads, these pages must soon be insensible. No rank is so high, no station so obscure, as to hope for exemption ; no power so great as to offer resistance, nor any situation so low as to escape detection. The pleasures and enjoyments, as well as the labours and pains of human life, must come to a conclusion, and, amidst the perpetual engagements, and incessant pursuits of men, a solemn voice may be heard, proclaiming that “all is vanity.” Yes, reader, at this instant the words are repeated, and the sigh, which

* It is computed that there is in the gross population of the world, about one death in every second of time.

proceeds from thy heart, bears witness to their truth. Neither riches, nor honours, nor business, nor pleasure, nor any temporal enjoyment, can satisfy the mind of man. They fail even in their highest and most permanent degree. How utterly insignificant then must they be, in that state of fluctuation and disappointment, usually presented to most of their votaries, and, especially, to those who have trusted chiefly to them.

Happiness is the desire of every creature, but alas! how few obtain it here? Man is constantly in pursuit of it, but still it is distant; grant him but the desire of this day, and he anticipates felicity: he obtains his desire, but yet he is not happy. Days and years, are spent in the chase of bubbles, which elude the grasp, or, if caught, yield only successive disappointments, and confirm the truth of the warning voice—that all is vanity; for, earthly happiness is but a shadow, and as a shadow it vanishes.

The object of sound philosophy is to make men happy, and knowledge is only useful in so far as it promotes this end. The foundation, of true wisdom, rests on the belief, that this life forms but a mere speck, in the duration of man's existence.

The first and great principle of philosophy is, that man abides not here, but is created for a world far removed from this. I know of no language strong enough to employ in proclaiming this truth. But why require any power of reasoning, any glowing eloquence, to persuade men of a truth which their daily and melancholy experience must establish: alas! it is this very circumstance, this daily experience, which has made them heedless of the fact; which has made them regardless of the removal of man, from time to eternity, and given to the fleeting moments, as they pass in rapid succession, a power and a fascination, to subjugate an immortal spirit to their

dominion. Were one man singled out in an age, and taken from his brethren, then, we might expect that the same awe and admiration should be produced, as prevailed amongst the beholders, of the resurrection of Lazarus, from the dead. But that which is every day repeated, astonishing as it may in itself be, makes little impression on the mind, and, to the generality of mankind, it is much the same as if it never occurred. He who is exposed only once to a storm, trembles at the prospect of destruction, whilst the more experienced mariner, beholds with unconcern the raging billows, and all the fury of the elements. It is not till we be called ourselves to forsake this life, or perhaps have the dearest friend torn from our embrace, that we feelingly believe that this world is only a portion, and a very little portion too, of our inheritance. The grave preaches the truth. The dead teach the living. The body, that we consign to its kindred dust, tells us that we must follow, and bids us prepare for eternity. All that occupies us, occupied it. It was warmed, it was clothed, it felt as we. The mind was active in the same pursuits, sought the same pleasures, indulged the same hopes and desires as we still do. It was subject to the same passions, it felt the same pains. But now, the world has passed away. These desires, hopes, and fears are at an end, and a new state of existence is begun, an existence which is everlasting, whilst this mortal state is now for ever over. How awful the word for ever ! Yet this word applies also to us. In a day, in an hour, we also may lose all connexion with this life, and in a few years, at farthest, it must be dissolved. Then, this world and all it contains, shall be as little to us, as it now is to the cold corpse, which is fast hastening to dust.

The first and great principle, then, of philosophy is, that this life is only a prelude to another ; all

sound philosophy teaches this, but Christian philosophy teaches more. It instructs us how this came to be; it does more, it enables us to look into futurity, and rejoice in the bright prospect which it unfolds.

Man originally was created innocent and happy, he was placed in a world, beautiful in all its parts, and full of delight; all nature was gay and smiling, every creature filled with joy, and free from harm. Had man remained innocent, he should have remained happy, and have inherited for ever this glorious habitation, which came all perfect from the hand of God. His continuance here was on the condition of his obedience, for he was expressly assured, that in the day he did what God had forbidden, he should die, that is, he should be discharged from this paradise, and become insensible to all happiness, being banished for ever from the presence of God, and associated, in misery, with those fallen spirits who had already sinned. Man did not continue innocent. He disobeyed the command of his God, and in that sad moment, and by that one act, his nature was changed. He was no longer pure, as he came from the hand of his Maker. He had dared to doubt the truth, and the kindness, of a Being by whom he had been created, by whose power alone he was sustained, and, by whose care and bounty, he was made to rejoice and be glad. Sorrow, indeed, might fill the angelic host, when they saw the deadly act of man; but even with these commiserating spirits, there could be no appeal from the just sentence of God—no hope, that when angels had been left to their fate, man should be again made holy, and restored to favour. But, amidst the darkness and destruction which seemed inevitable, a bright and glorious splendour of mercy appeared, hope and joy again visited the heart of Adam. By the interposition of Jesus,

the Son of God, pardon and peace were proclaimed to him, who, in defiance of a clear, unequivocal, and positive command, had listened to the lie, and obeyed the advice of the Deceiver. But, although saved from immediate death, a dreadful change had taken place. The very earth itself, was cursed for the sake of sin; the whole creation, every animal, suffered in the fall of Adam. Parent of mankind! happy were it, had this been all; but from thy fallen nature a sinful race has sprung, each and every one unclean, each and every one, requiring the same act of grace, the same regenerating Spirit of holiness. By the blessed work of Jesus, another world, another state, far excelling that which Adam lost, was purchased for him and for his posterity. Into this state he was not to be immediately removed, but a separation was to be made of the soul from the body, which was, for a time, to return to its kindred dust, as a sad memorial of the fall of man. The sentence of death, or of the dissolution of the body, was thus passed on all men. But the sting of death was destroyed, it became only the mean, or way appointed by God, for the removal of man from this world, which was forfeited, and which was no longer a paradise, to that more glorious and happy state, purchased by the interposition of Jesus.

The fall of man, then, though attended by the ruin of this world, and the loss of his own glory and happiness here, was productive, through the rich mercy of God, of a state of felicity and exaltation far excelling that enjoyed by Adam, in the garden of Eden, inconceivably surpassing it, inasmuch, as the second Adam transcends the first. We, the children of Adam, are interested, alike with him, both in his fall and in his renovation. We are called from his history, to believe that as he was originally created for a perpetual paradise here, we are formed

for an everlasting paradise elsewhere. We are led to view this life merely as a state of previous existence, and preparation for our true and permanent life. Here, as strangers and pilgrims, we are journeying towards the new paradise, and welcome death as the termination of our probation, and as the mode employed, by God, for removing us hence, and introducing us into the glories, and full blessedness, of Christ's eternal kingdom. Two men have indeed been taken away without dying, but with these exceptions, it has been appointed that all must taste of death. The soul must be separated from the body, which is left here, till, at the end of time, and the judgment, and destruction of this world, it be reunited, pure and glorified, to its former spirit, when the new man is fitted for the new heaven, and the new earth.

What reflecting mind, then, can refuse to acknowledge the superiority of those things which are to come, over those which at present exist, and, the expediency of choosing that good part which shall never be taken away? Yet, although the judgment must assent, the heart seldom goes along with the judgment, and present things keep a fast hold on our choice. But how trifling, how delusive the choice, when made to the exclusion of futurity. The objects and desires of time, can bear no comparison with those of eternity, they are nothing in point of stability and duration, and they are less than nothing, if compared in their nature, or the happiness they afford, even in their greatest perfection. Is there any one hope or enjoyment, limited to time, which can give uninterrupted pleasure? Riches take to themselves wings, and who amongst us does not know many instances of sad reverse of fortune? the mighty ones of the earth, may bid, unexpectedly, a long farewell to all their greatness. The praise of the world

is like the gleam of a meteor, friendships are dissolved, domestic happiness may be destroyed in a moment, health is insecure and dependent on causes we cannot control: but even were health, and friendship, and riches, and every temporal comfort joined together, and made sure, still, life itself must end, and, amidst the self-gratulation of "soul, take thine ease," the sentence may have gone forth, "this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Every thing here is fleeting fast away, time itself is perpetually on the wing, and the awful hour is steadily approaching, which is to break the thread of life, and introduce in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, an everlasting world. "Lift up thine eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath, for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner, but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished."

No man who attends to the operations of his own mind, can hesitate to admit the vanity of time, and the transient nature of all that the world contains. In the moment of imagination, as I walk solitary over the field, how rapid, and changeable is the scene which presents itself to the mind, and how quickly do I pass to the most remote periods. I can call up the former inhabitants of the land, from their mansions of silence, and give them again activity and animation. I see the shepherd, tending his scattered flocks on the bleak hills, or the aged traveller, wandering amongst the mountains, his hair and ancient garments flying before the wind; I enter into his thoughts and pursuits, and give him views and desires suitable to the time at which he lived, I commiserate his fatigues, or sympathise in the prospect, of his reposing his wearied limbs, in the hut of his family. I meet the priest, hastening, with

anxious steps, to reach his convent, and hear the bell which summons the brethren to their devotions. As my thoughts ramble, I behold contending armies cover the ground; I see the stronghold of the chief destroyed, or the marauding band stealing silently along the glen. How fleeting the scene, how rapidly does it shift, how transient the actions, how short-lived the desires and feelings, I give to the shadows which pass before me! The events of ages fly before my eyes with the rapidity of thought. Now, I behold every thing barren, and the earth covered with heath, the sky dark and cloudy, and man rude and barbarous. In a moment, a rich country is gilded with the sun, gay cities arise, and all the pomp and luxury of civilized society deck the scene. Men whom I have known, only, from the page of history, are familiar to me. I know their very thoughts. The heroes of antiquity, the kings and sages of my own land, pass in vision before me. I clothe every thing, which once existed, with a temporary existence. The passions which animated the dead, I give unto them again; but on all these phantoms it is written, "I appear only to depart." Alas! shall all that interested man, that gave him so much thought, that bound him so strongly to time, and deluded him respecting futurity, shall all the triumph of the warrior, the deep-laid schemes of the wise and prudent, the daily cares of life, come to this, and be as the vision of a moment? It is indeed true. When I look back on my life, it is only as a dream; I recall the scenes and the actions, but the keen passions, the poignant feelings are gone. I look back on these scenes, almost, as on the days of another being, or, if I fix one scene in my mind, as peculiarly my own, it gives me the painful feeling that the pleasure has fled, or recalls to my remembrance, that then I suffered. The pursuits of this

day, are, rapidly, entering the treasury of memory, where alone they shall exist, to return only with the fleeting, unsubstantial, scenes conjured up by imagination. Alas! here I am deceived. Those scenes and thoughts, which I rashly said should be, as though they had never been, shall all be preserved. In the great day, when I appear before my Judge, memory shall empty her stores, and, with scrupulous fidelity, make me rapidly live over every moment, and present a view of my whole life. How careful ought this reflection to make me of the present time, shunning its dangerous pleasures, its sinful pursuits, and rising above all its cares and temptations. In a short period I shall lose all my relish for these pleasures, I shall cease to be agitated by these passions, or interested in these cares. I shall view the transactions of last year, as if they were the deeds of another, but in the awful day of judgment, conscience shall tell me they are all my own, and every thing shall then appear in its true colour, and in its real merit.

But though I know that this life is fleeting away, and is indeed as a vision, yet still I am bound unto it, as if by a mighty spell. When I leave my mind to its reflections, these are influenced by surrounding objects, and the associations they produce. Amidst the activity of society, or the busy scenes displayed by the sun, my imagination wanders over the transactions of life, and follows out the ideas suggested by what I actually see or hear, and which lead to keen desires respecting the present, or to schemes for the future. But when the day is at an end, and I behold the cloudless sky, spangled over with innumerable stars, and enlightened by the luminary which rules by night, my mind rises to other worlds, and thence to the great Creator, whose power formed and whose wisdom regulates the universe; my soul is abstracted from the earth, and ascends to the habitation of

souls; I think of those who have departed and are rejoicing in the bright regions of heaven; I sigh on the recollection of what I have lost, but I bless God, for the prospect of myself, also, reaching that happy land. Do I stand alone in the silence of the night, when neither moon nor stars enlighten the earth? All is dark, I see little more than the ground on which I stand. I hear only the sound of the wind, or the murmur of the brook: perhaps all is still, and the senses are at rest. I retire within myself, and reflect on the vanity of life. Perhaps my imagination goes abroad, and presents a picture of what is passing around me in the abodes of men, but it returns, to bring back the deep, perhaps the painful conviction, that all is but a vision. I feel that time is on the wing. I know that the dark globe on which I stand has, whilst my thoughts were flowing, carried me through a tract of space, which hath marked my nearer approach to eternity. I look around and feel that I am the creature of a moment, a spot on this mighty globe, but a spot not unseen by God, nor unprotected by him. The cares, the evils, the sins of this state oppress my mind: for a time it is dark as the night which surrounds me, but I anticipate the return of light, and the splendour of the sun. I hail with joy the Sun of righteousness, which ariseth to dispel the darkness of my mind, to warm my heart, and to restore me to everlasting day. I rejoice that there is a land, where night never comes, where there are neither storms, nor tempests, nor cares, nor disappointments, nor fears, nor illusions, where sin cannot enter, and where misery is unknown. The night of sorrow may last for a time, but the morning shall break at length. I shall forget my troubles as a dream. I shall be purified from my sin. I shall behold him who died for me, who loved me, and who, worthless as I am, was afflicted in all

my afflictions, supported me in all my cares and distresses, who preserved me in temptations, and took away my sin from me. I shall meet my dear friends, and join with them in praise to the most high God, and with them I shall, for ever, rejoice in the presence of my Redeemer.

Beyond this world, the imagination can travel, and impart to the scenes of its own creation, a life and a vividness, almost, persuasive of reality. In the silence and solitude of the night, it is not the strong working of the mind, to abstract its attention from the present, nor the power of the poet's fancy, which can subjugate, and bring near the distant object, or remove the veil from a world, before unseen. But a Spirit, not unknown, operates on the heart, abstracts the thoughts from this world, and all its cares and vanities, and carries them to the Temple above. There, we recognise our beloved friends, who may long have left us, and associate the remembrance of their former endearments, and mortal forms, with the spiritual glory in which we behold them. As we dwell on the scene, the semblance of reality increases, and we feel what it is, to have fellowship with the departed spirits of the just. If aught on earth, can resemble the vision of the apostle, when caught up into the third heaven, it is, the high-wrought ecstasy of the soul, in contemplating the blessedness of the saints we loved, and when, almost carried out of the body into the splendour of heaven, we, for a time, behold the Saviour whom we love, surrounded by his angels, and the multitude of the redeemed, and the much-loved companions of our past days, now rejoicing in his affection, beholding his glory, and celebrating his praise. We, almost, join the hymn of thanksgiving. Mingling in the heavenly society, and breathing a holy atmosphere, we, for a time, forget that we are still in a world of sin, temptation, and

suffering. Yet such visits, shew as they may be, to the mount of transfiguration, are cordials to the soul, and give a foretaste of the joys promised to those who overcome this world.

Time has brought me nearer to eternity, whilst these thoughts were passing through my mind. I have been transported through an immense tract in space, with a velocity great, yet not perceived. My life has run through a corresponding portion of its duration. The dream is drawing to a conclusion. The true life is approaching, that never-ending, never-changing life, which is to be determined by this short span of existence. Through time I must pass, but I pass it only as the gate into eternity. Shall I then neglect those few moments, which are to fix my everlasting life! Shall I trifle at that gate, which is to usher me into eternal happiness, or never-ceasing misery! Shall I risk immortal glory, for the vision of a moment, for the fleeting indulgences of an hour! Time, is given me to prepare for eternity, to become acquainted with him who hath destroyed death, and brought life and immortality to light. He is standing at the door knocking. The numbered moment is already on the wing, which terminates his offer of mercy, and my probation for eternity. How awful the thought! How merciful the offer! Salvation, joy, and everlasting blessedness, if I believe on Jesus who hath given me this period, short, yet sufficiently long, to believe. Let me then improve the time, for the days are evil, and ere I go down to the dark habitation of death, may I have good hope, in the loving-kindness of my God, and fall asleep in the joyful expectation, of awakening in that happy place, prepared by Jesus, for those sons of Adam, whom he came to redeem.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE MEANS BY WHICH A FUTURE STATE OF
HAPPINESS IS PROCURED.

As our hopes and prospects here are limited, and must be terminated; as the world itself, which we now inhabit, is to be destroyed, it becomes us, as rational creatures, at all times, to consider ourselves as intended for another state, and diligently to inquire, how it was procured, and still is to be obtained. Into a future state all must enter, and the time is not left to their own choice. Men, though engrossed with this life, must, nevertheless, admit that they are to leave it. Neither power, nor wealth, nor the aid of man can prolong their stay, more than these can control the laws of nature, or check the heavenly bodies in their course. Many may have neglected this first principle of philosophy. They may neither have prepared for their permanent existence, nor thought about it, but enter upon it they must, some, after repeated and prolonged warnings, others, without the intimation of a single hour.

In the Scriptures, we are clearly informed of the way in which this new world was procured, and man saved from the punishment of sin. We bless God that in this our dark and ignorant state, he hath been pleased, at divers times and in sundry manners, to grant us a revelation of his will respecting us, and full intimations regarding every thing which is essential to our salvation. This revelation, and these intimations, are contained in that most inestimable

book called the Bible, which all wise and good men acknowledge as the word of God, and as the only certain source of information in religion. We there learn, that Jesus the Son of God, undertook the salvation of the human race, in a way that neither men nor angels could have conceived, and that devils themselves, could, scarcely, have been so presumptuous as to suppose. This method consisted in nothing less than his undertaking to become a man, and to bear the punishment due to men. This was twofold, the death of the body, and the death of the soul, that is, its banishment from God, its privation of all enjoyment. His gracious offer was accepted. He was, for a time, forsaken of God for our sake, and died in our stead, and no glory, no happiness, man is hereafter to enjoy, can be too great to repay the mighty price. This great, this astonishing event, the incarnation and vicarious suffering of the second person in the Trinity, was, equally with the fall of Adam, foreseen and arranged in the eternal counsels of the Godhead, before the creation of the earth. Therefore, in one view, we may look upon this world as called into existence, in order to be the place, where Christ should display and magnify the power and glory of God. For, all other events which ever have occurred, since the foundation of the world, or which shall happen, even till the end of time, shrink into nothing, when compared with the history of redemption. Alas ! that any man, that all men, should think so little of that, which involves a world's fate, of that, in which they are so deeply interested. There must have been a period when God alone existed, and when there were neither angels nor heavens. Even then, all respecting this world, was foreseen and determined. But it was not till after the fall of man, that the eternal purpose of the Godhead was revealed. Had Adam continued innocent,

he had continued happy, and, with Eve, possessed this world in its best estate. But he did not remain innocent, and it was foreseen that he would not remain so. Being left to the freedom of his own will, he fell, and Satan, doubtless, exulted in the ruin he had accomplished, and rejoiced when he heard the fair work of God pronounced to be cursed, for the sake of man, whom he had deluded. But on this very portion of God's creation, on which the enemy had exercised his power, and which he hoped to retain, for ever, under his domination, was to be exhibited, to the whole host of intelligent beings, the glory of that God, whose power he had dared, and whose work he had hoped to destroy. On that orb which he desired to seize, or to see blotted for ever out of existence, were to be displayed the glory, and the power, and the whole perfection of the Godhead, in a way which angels had not heretofore seen, and which could, far less, have entered into the heart of man to conceive. For, behold, not only the fallen pair are rescued from his power, but from them proceeded, after their restoration, a numerous progeny, millions of whom, instead of only one pair, arose to glorify God; and from this offspring proceeded, at length, Him who was to destroy the serpent. The moment man fell, Jesus began his mediatorial office, which was new in heaven, and beheld with astonishment and praise by all the angelic host. From that instant, man could no longer approach to God, nor did God communicate with man, but through the intermedium of Jesus. This mediatorial agency, of the Son of God, has existed from that time, and shall endure till the termination of all things, when the glorious work of redemption shall be accomplished, and the last saint be gathered from the earth.

Notwithstanding the declaration of Scripture, conveyed in explicit and positive terms, and reiterated

so frequently, as to mark its essential importance, yet, many deny the doctrine of original sin, or the sinfulness of man's nature since the fall, a doctrine so interwoven with that of the atonement, that we invariably find when the one is rejected, so, also, is the other. In considering this subject, the chief question to be answered is, was Adam as perfect, sinless, and pure after his disobedience, as at the moment of his creation? after that sad act, did he retain the same essential quality of innocence as before, and was he as little disposed to sin as at first? Did he from the time of his exclusion from Paradise, till the day of his death, remain free from sin? The question is not, whether his sin was, or was not, forgiven, but, whether the quality of his soul remained unchanged. A stain on a tablet may be wiped out, and the tablet, though once sullied, may regain its pristine brightness, but one single stain on the mind, indelibly alters its character. It never again can be spotless, or holy, unless it be, by an almighty power, again restored or changed. It is vain to talk of a pure soul sinning once, and remaining pure as at first, even were the guilt of that act forgiven, and its remembrance blotted out. For, such obliteration does not affect the nature of the soul itself, but relates to the Being offended. It is morally contaminated, no longer perfectly holy in its nature, and it signifies not by what name we designate this alteration, so long as the imperfection itself is admitted. It is maintained, that although Adam sinned, yet he still continued, after this transgression, as upright and holy as before it, and was just as liable to fall at first as afterwards. Read the Scriptures, and see whether Adam was allowed to pass without punishment and suffering. Is it reasonable to suppose that, if he were forgiven by a simple act of mercy, and made holy as at first, he should still be punished by sorrow?

If, on the other hand, he was to atone for his transgression by this suffering, then he was not forgiven by grace, but he purchased an indemnity. If his temporal sufferings were not a price, paid for his fault, they can only be considered as a penalty, which being subjected to, he could claim to be restored to his former right. They could not be of a purifying, or purgatorial nature, for it is maintained that he was just as holy and pure as at first. The nature which Adam possessed, was the only one he could communicate to his descendents. If frail or sinful, such must be the nature of his progeny; a corrupt tree must bring forth corrupt fruit. Do we not even in minor particulars, observe the inheritance of particular dispositions? and if this be so, there is at least nothing impossible, in the inheritance of a general quality; on the contrary it, independent of revelation, appears just as possible for a man to communicate to his posterity, the spirit of an angel, as a pure human spirit, if his own be defiled. It is not to be understood that he must give the very same propensities he has himself, but he must give the same general nature. If all mankind are, at birth, just as innocent and perfect as Adam was, at his creation, and have no derived corruption or imperfection, it is evident that each, for himself, must stand as Adam stood, on his own individual probation; and, if out of all the myriads of human souls, that have existed since the fall, not one can be found perfect—not one solitary instance be met with, of a man who could boldly say to his Maker, that he required no forgiveness, and needed not to make any confession of sin, or sue for mercy, then, independent of Scripture testimony, it is easier to believe that there does exist some original evil in the soul of man, than that out of so many beings, supposed to be innocent at birth, not one can be found capable

of retaining his perfection to the last. In no state of society, in no part of the world, in no age, has a nation, tribe, or family been discovered, meriting the name of holy beings. It is said that no descendent of Adam can be punished for Adam's transgression. True, he shall no more be punished for Adam's personal sin, at or after the fall, than he shall be rewarded for Adam's obedience in his state of innocence. The argument is quite fallacious, and never can prove that Adam was not different after his fall, from what he was before, and that this difference of nature does not descend. In the sufferings and death of infants, we do not see any imputed punishment, on account of Adam's disobedience, but we see a corroboration of the doctrine, that their own nature is not holy, and that they are participators, in the consequences of the curse pronounced against original sin.

By anticipation, the obedience and sufferings of Jesus, benefited Adam, and also his posterity, previous to their actual performance and endurance. But, during all this period, it was ordained that an innocent animal should be sacrificed by men, to intimate that they deserved death, and were only saved by the death of another. Now, the blood of bulls or of goats could, in itself, be of no efficacy in cleansing from sin. It could be of no avail, unless as a prefiguration of the sacrifice of Jesus. The simple sacrifices of the patriarchs, and the more complex rites, and ordinations, of the Mosaic law, merely, in so many different ways, showed forth the expiation of sin, by the death of Jesus Christ. At a very early time, we find a memorable evidence, of the intention of sacrifices, in the history of Cain and Abel. Cain, in a self-righteous spirit, offered unto God the fruits of the earth, as a token of thankfulness for food and raiment, and an acknowledgment of his providence,

but, virtually, denying any need of a propitiation for sin. Abel brought the firstlings of his flock, giving their life for his own, and presenting their blood as a vicarious expiation. The answer of God to Cain is decisive—"If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted." How important was this to Cain, and how instructive to us! Let those who deny the necessity of an atonement, those who trust in their own righteousness, or in the mercy of God, placed in opposition to his justice, reflect on the declared terms of acceptance. If such men do nothing but good, shall they not be accepted? but if they do not, it behoves them to consider the sad alternative; and one, who may be supposed to know the matter well, has declared, "there is none good, no not one."

The sacrifice of animals, in the early ages, must have been of divine institution. We read not, indeed, of the express command given to Adam. But, if we discard not, altogether, the divine authority of the books of Moses, we have, subsequently, there, the explicit ordination of Jehovah. The exact measure of knowledge, which the offerers had, respecting the future, and more important sacrifice, which they prefigured, it is not possible for us to determine. We know that they all offered them, as a propitiation for sin, and as an acknowledgment that they could only be accepted by the shedding of blood, without which there was no remission of sin. We now, by the glorious light of the gospel, perceive more clearly the true value of these sacrifices, and enter into the reasoning of the apostle Paul, "For the law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices, which they offer year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect." "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin." Under the Mosaic law, a most lively repre-

sentation, of the great and ultimate sacrifice, was made, by the high priest slaying a bullock, and sprinkling the blood before the mercy-seat. Thereafter, he took two goats, and having slain the one, and sprinkled the blood, as had been done with the blood of the bullock, he made an end of "reconciling the holy place." Then, he laid his hand on the live goat, and confessed, over him, the iniquities of the children of Israel, and sent him away to the wilderness. Paul explains this solemn sacrifice, after he had noticed the necessity of the high priest entering, every year, into the holiest, or second tabernacle, by saying, "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building, neither by the blood of goats or calves, but by his own blood, he entered in, once, into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

The sacrifice of the paschal lamb, was a still more striking representation, of the efficacy of the blood of Jesus. The first time he was slain, his blood, which was sprinkled on the doors, preserved the eldest child, whilst, in all those houses where this mark was not found, the angel of the Lord destroyed the first-born. In like manner, Christ, who is our passover, is sacrificed for us. He was slain, at the very time, of the celebration of the Jewish passover. Whosoever is washed with his blood shall never perish, but he on whom it is not found, shall be destroyed, as certainly, as the first-born of the Egyptians.

Besides these solemn sacrifices, and the particular trespass offerings made by individuals, it was an express ordinance, of the Lord, that the priest should "offer, every day, a bullock for a sin-offering, for atonement," and two lambs, day by day, continually, the one for a morning, and the other for an evening

sacrifice. This was to be done "at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, before the Lord, where I will meet you," "and then I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory." Paul, addressing the Hebrews, tells them, in allusion to this ordinance, "every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering often-times the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God. For, by one offering, he hath perfected, for ever, them that are sanctified." And, speaking of the succession of priests who made an atonement for the people, he informs them that "this man, because he continueth for ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore, he is able to save them, unto the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

In every period of the world, during the patriarchal age, the Mosaic economy, and the Christian dispensation, there has been only one way of acceptance with God, and one way of procuring the Holy Spirit, without whose influence, neither Antediluvian, Jew, nor Christian could be sanctified. The mere offering of a sacrifice, could no more save the Jew, than the mere acknowledgment of the atonement made by Jesus Christ, can save the Christian. There must have been, in all acceptable worshippers, a conviction of sin, a hearty desire after forgiveness, a purpose of reformation, a steady dependence on the promised mercy of God, through the shedding of blood as an atonement, and a reception of the Holy Spirit. Whilst the patriarchal and Jewish worshipper, looked on the blood which flowed from the innocent victim, and then upon its lifeless body, he saw, and acknowledged, the punishment which he deserved, and the vicarious method of his escape.

The devout men of old, when engaged in the solemn sacrifice, and seeing, though darkly, the prefiguration, formed one part of that worshipping church, which now contemplates, with faith and hope, the great and everlasting atonement, made on the cross at Calvary, with all the blessings which flow from it. We are all one in Christ, and saved by his blood alone, and form a portion of that glorious assembly, in heaven, which is before the throne; for, even here, on earth, we have our part and lot with patriarchs, and prophets, and all the holy men, who of old, hoped in him who has, now, confirmed his covenant of grace and mercy with them in everlasting blessedness.

Leaving, then, these types and ceremonies, we proceed to the consideration of the great sacrifice which Christ offered "to put away sin," after which he entered "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

From the Scriptures, which are the only sources of our knowledge in religion, we learn in the most decided language, that there are three persons in the Godhead, though only one nature, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For the redemption of man, the Son took to himself the body and the soul of a man, and appeared in this world at the appointed time. He differed from all mankind, inasmuch as his human soul was free from sin, pure, and holy, as that of Adam at his creation. But he differed still more in this, that the man Jesus Christ, had also the divine nature, under his human form.

Three important points, are to be attended to, in the history of Jesus. The first is, that during the whole course of his life here, he continued in a state of unspotted innocence and perfect obedience. This he did in our name and behalf, performing fully that which Adam failed to do. He submitted to be

tempted of the devil, that he might withstand that to which our first parents yielded. He was subjected to the ordinary temptations of life, being in all points tried as we are, yet, in all, he maintained spotless purity, his soul being filled with love to God, hatred to sin, a supreme desire to obey the divine law, to do the work of his Father in heaven, and to promote his honour and glory. From first to last, he maintained that perfect obedience, those pure and holy thoughts and desires, those sentiments and inclinations, exactly belonging to his situation, so that no part of the law, or of the will of God, was broken or disregarded. He acted, then, as Adam ought to have done, in order to continue in Paradise. The second point in the history of Jesus is, that he submitted to death also, in our name and behalf, thus enduring that punishment which was due to us, death of the body, and being forsaken of God. The divine nature could not suffer, but his human frame suffered in an extreme degree, and his soul sustained an agony, of which we can have no conception, when he made it an offering for sin. The third point is, that Jesus declared that if he went not away, if he did not die, the Holy Spirit would not come to his disciples, and without the communication of the Spirit, Christ had appeared in vain. I doubt not, that, when mercy to man was first announced in heaven, by the offer of the Son, to make reconciliation, the angels, who saw their brethren who fell, still remain sinful, and unchanged, could discover no way of making a sinful soul holy, and acceptable to God. What, then, must have been their astonishment, to discover, as part of the mysterious plan of redemption, that the divine Spirit, himself, should dwell in the human soul, and make it once more holy. The sufferings of Jesus, must never be considered, without remembering the promise of

the Spirit, for Christ delivers not only from the punishment of sin, but also from its tyranny, destroying in the heart of man, by his Spirit, its love and power. Every Christian then, in contemplating the work of Christ, when through the eternal Spirit he offered himself as a sacrifice for sin, and satisfied the justice of a holy God, must believe that he, thereby, receives an imputed righteousness, an imputed punishment, and a sanctifying Spirit, for he is made one with Christ. The three fundamental doctrines of Christianity, therefore, are the atonement, imputed compliance with the whole law of God in a perfect degree, and regeneration.

The redemptory work of Christ, determined by God, before the foundation of the world, had in successive ages been predicted by his prophets, and the circumstances attending it minutely foretold; many occurrences in the patriarchal ages, many events in the history of the Jewish nation, all the most important ceremonies and sacrifices of the dispensation given by Moses, served as types or figures of the Messiah. At sundry times, and in divers manners, the Spirit of God spake by the holy prophets, predicting those things which should precede, accompany, and succeed the death of our Redeemer. The hour had now arrived, when Jesus, having given to men a holy example, and obeyed in all things the law of God, having communicated to his disciples and hearers, a more perfect system of morals and spiritual instruction, than had been done before, having preached the gospel to the poor, and fulfilled all those things, which were foretold, as happening before his death, was to enter upon his agony. He had, during his public ministry, opened the eyes of the blind, restored hearing to the deaf, made the lame to walk, and recalled the dead to life. He had testified that in him, was fulfilled the writing of

Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." He knew that now he was to go to Jerusalem, where he must needs suffer many things, and be killed. He had expressly desired his disciples, whom he sent to prepare for the celebration of the passover, to say, "My time is come," and to his heavenly Father he had addressed himself in prayer, "Father, the hour is come." In the garden of Gethsemane, he entered on his atoning sufferings. He had, in a covenant of mercy, undertaken to bear the sins of man, and the punishment of God's displeasure. But till now, although in his human nature, a man of sorrows, he had never known or felt, the deep horror of a sinner, in the presence of a holy God. His soul was indeed sore amazed, and in the bitterness of his grief, he prayed that if it were possible, the cup of suffering might pass from him. "Being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly;" and why was that holy soul thus agonized? There can be no suffering without sin, and, if now, we find this man of sorrows, overwhelmed with deep and inexpressible agony, and praying more earnestly for deliverance or support, surely, he must either have been a sinful creature, or must, in truth, have been bearing the guilt, and sustaining the punishment of others. O ye unhappy men, who, in the pride and coldness of Socinian philosophy, see nothing in the sorrow and the death of the blessed Jesus, but the confirmation of his mission by martyrdom, come near and behold again the Lamb of God on the cross, and may the eternal Spirit touch your hearts, and convince you that a greater than Moses, or any other prophet, offered

himself a true sacrifice for your sins, "that through death, he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil." From the very agony alone, we are not only assured of the doctrine of an atonement, but of the divinity of our Saviour. For had he been a mere created being, similar to the angels or to Adam, he must have been called into existence by the Creator, with the foreknowledge and express design, that he should without any choice on his part, be made an offering for sin. But by the mysterious union, which no one can understand, of two natures, Christ was able, without injustice on the part of God, or mere passive obedience on the part of a spotless and unresisting creature, to say, "Lo, I come to do thy will, to reconcile the attributes of justice and mercy, and to magnify the law, and make it honourable." Inconceivable love on the part of God! Shall man look, with indifference, on this dark spot in the garden of Gethsemane, whilst angels behold with amazement the work of redemption? Shall man, alone, disregard the depth of this agony, and the love and the mercy of a suffering Redeemer? Let those who would know how hateful sin, though betokened by only one transgression, is in the sight of God, look to the sufferings of the Messiah. Let it not for one moment be supposed, that had there been no sinner but Adam, and no transgression, but the first one on the record of Scripture, the propitiation should not have been required, and the Son of God should not have endured his agony in the garden, or his bitter sorrow on the cross, when he made an expiation for sin. And let the man who pleads guilty only to, what he calls, a venial act of sin, consider, that by that admission, he is unfit to appear in the presence of God, and learn from the overwhelming agony of the holy Jesus, when he had sin imputed to him in the sight of God, what

the agony and the horror of the sinner himself must be, when he appears before a God of purity, and finds himself for ever unfit for remaining in his presence.

But now the agony in the garden is over, now is the Son of man delivered into the hands of sinners, to suffer the cruel mockings and scourging predicted by the Spirit of God. All things are prepared for the mysterious and solemn catastrophe. On the fourteenth day of the first month, corresponding that year to Friday, the third day of April, the day appointed for slaying the paschal lamb, Jesus was numbered with the transgressors. At "the third hour," or nine o'clock in the morning, he was nailed to the cross, and lifted up, according to his own prediction, and the type employed by Moses in the wilderness. Behold now the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. Angels and archangels surround the cross, and ardently contemplate the wondrous work of redemption. All heaven is filled with awe and solemn admiration; man alone is insensible. For three hours, the power of hell, seems to prevail, without any interruption, and the spectators, revile and deride, the sufferings of the blessed Jesus. "He saved others, himself he cannot save." Cruel mockers, ye have said the truth, he is pledged to suffer; himself he cannot, will not, save. But, behold, amidst all the inhuman taunting, when the sun has reached his meridian height, "about the sixth hour," or noon, darkness suddenly overspreads the land, and for three hours, bears witness to the deep distress and anguish of the Redeemer's soul. At three o'clock in the afternoon, Jesus, having uttered with a loud voice, these remarkable words, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" and having in compliance with prophecy received vinegar, he said, "It is finished!" "and when Jesus had cried

with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit, and having said thus, he gave up the ghost." "It is finished!" a world is redeemed from the power of the enemy, who had hoped again to undo the work of God. The promises of the Almighty, and the prophecies of his servants, had all a fulfilment in this event, and yet the arch-deceiver knew so little of their meaning, that he promoted their accomplishment, and tempted Judas, to betray his Lord, into the hands of those, whom he hoped, by putting him to death, would frustrate the merciful plan of God, and deliver into his power, a world already lying in wickedness. Could mortals have beheld the principalities and powers, who surrounded the cross, they would indeed have seen a host of evil spirits, waiting in eager expectation of the moment, when the death of the Messiah should confirm their power, and shut out for ever the hope of mercy from man. Jesus has not yet hung so long on the cross as to exhaust his strength. They must yet wait a little longer for their triumph, but they wait in hope; and could the hearts of the fallen angels, ever have been revisited with aught like joy, it must have been when they beheld the promised Messiah, in the bitterness of his soul, lamenting that his Father had forsaken him, and when they had the near prospect of defeating, for ever, the mercy of God. But as they press nearer the cross, rejoicing in the sufferings, and watching with impatience, for the moment, when the Saviour, exhausted by anguish, should yield to death, behold the loud voice is uttered, the voice of confidence and victory, Jesus pronounced and declared, "It is finished!" The truth, with the rapidity of lightning, now bursts upon their view; they feel that they have been working to their own destruction, that Jesus has spoiled principalities and powers, and

made a show of them openly. With confusion and consternation, the apostate ranks roll back from the presence of the Son of God, as he leaves his human body, and is again visited by the joyful light of his Father's countenance. They, who had been driven from heaven, in captivity, are again led captive, whilst the gifts of grace and mercy, are obtained for the rebellious children of Adam. Was it at this awful moment, and amidst this consternation of spiritual wickednesses, that the earth was convulsed, the rocks rent, and the veil of the temple torn from top to bottom? The Lamb of God has now been sacrificed, and hangs still upon the cross. To fulfil the Scripture, a Roman soldier pierces his side with a spear, and lo! another prediction is accomplished, a stream of blood and of water flows from the wound. In that day was a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, which shall never be dried up, which shall continue to flow, till the last descendent of Adam be purified from his iniquity, and till every stain be washed away, from the last soul which shall be brought to the hallowed stream. Who could behold these prodigies without exclaiming, with the centurion, "Truly this was the Son of God." But the hearts of the Jews were hardened, and even after he was laid in the grave, a guard was placed on his body. The morning of the third day was approaching, and the soldiers still surround the sepulchre, now talking of their military exploits and the glory of their nation, now passing in silence, by the tomb of the Redeemer of the world. The Sabbath is not yet ended, and all is still. But lo! the morning of the third day is ushered in, and, suddenly, the angel of the Lord appears to the astonished keepers. His countenance is like lightning, and his raiment white and shining. He appears not silently, but descends with thunder and in majesty, and for fear of him the

keepers did quake. He rolls away the stone, from the mouth of the tomb, they were set to watch. Jesus, who could not be held of death, who had power to lay down his life and to take it again, came forth, in spite of human guards or infernal spirits, and, with him, came many saints out of their graves, and went into the holy city, and showed themselves.

Who does not believe that, had he beheld all these things, he would have fallen down and worshipped, giving glory to God. But he who knows the human heart, better than man, hath said, that those who do not believe Moses and the prophets, would not believe, although one were to rise from the dead. The Roman soldiers beheld all these things: they saw the angel, they heard the thunders,—He whom they were set to watch, came forth, triumphant, from the tomb, yet they believed not. They indeed fled from the awful place, but they remained heathens; they fled to receive a bribe to conceal the truth, and mislead the multitude. Who amongst us, after reflecting on the insensibility of Jews and Romans, to all these prodigies, can be bold enough to say, that he would have been a better man, or a more zealous Christian, had he actually beheld these events, in place of merely reading of them? If any proof were wanting to us, of the hardness and insensibility of the human heart, if any evidence were demanded, of the soul being, since the fall, spiritually dead, we have only to consider how little effect was produced, by the miracles performed by Jesus, by the events which took place at his crucifixion, and, above all, the conduct of the soldiers, after beholding the glorious resurrection of the blessed Saviour. This is a consideration, which ought not to be lightly dismissed. It ought to make every wise man anxious that he may be delivered, from an evil heart of unbelief, and what he anxiously desires, he will, naturally, ear-

nestly pray for. If, in the solemn day of judgment, it be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, than for those who would not listen to our Lord, what must it be for him, who has been educated in a Christian land, who has had no prejudices to overcome, who gives a speculative assent to the doctrines of salvation, but who, practically, cares for none of these things? Ah! thoughtless mortal, be for one moment serious. Reflect, that in the garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross of Calvary, Jesus foresaw that at this time, you should be reminded, that, for the sins of man, he endured the bitter agony of his Father's wrath, and, in those sad moments, knew whether you would think on the sorrow he felt, and the love he manifested, or turn, with indifference from the contemplation of the anguish of that holy soul, which he then made an offering for sin. O blessed Saviour, thou didst hang on the cross, in torture of body, and unutterable agony of spirit. May thy sufferings be ever so present with us, that, by thy Holy Spirit, we may know somewhat, and feel somewhat of thy view of sin, and knowledge of its dreadful consequences. May we so know and feel thy great mercy, which shone so bright on Calvary, and so value thy whole work of redemption, as to find its benefit in the hour of vanity, pleasure, or indolence, or of temptation, trial, or sorrow; and ever, in the daily course of life, look on thee pierced for our sins, and feel the comfort and joy of thy love and power filling the soul, and enabling us to serve thee, unreservedly, and with delight.

After reading the record of the Messiah's sufferings, we naturally inquire into their end and object. As he obeyed the law of God which we had broken, and suffered in our stead the punishment due to our sin, we find, that this righteousness, and that atonement, will be imputed to those, who, unreservedly, acknow-

ledge the necessity of a propitiation, and, with cordial faith, are willing to accept of him as a Saviour. As in Adam all die, so, in Christ, shall all be made alive; for Jesus hath abolished death, in its formidable sense, and brought life and immortality to light. It is this glorious salvation, then, which is the source of all our hope and joy, and we humbly and devoutly acknowledge, that there is no other name, given under heaven, among men, whereby we can be saved. We, with assured confidence, believe, that Jesus is able to save unto the uttermost, all who come unto him.

But we must inquire, a little more minutely, into the means of salvation. I have said in general, that Jesus made a full and complete atonement for sin, obeyed the law of God, restored us to his favour, and has gone to prepare a place for us, instead of this world, which is to be destroyed. How is this redemption accomplished for you, for me, as individuals? In answer to this question, we are informed, that Jesus has ascended into heaven, to plead for each of his people, and present himself as his sacrifice, propitiation, and intercessor, on the terms of a covenant, well-ordered in all things and sure. He sends forth his Spirit to sanctify the individual, and unite him to himself, so, that being one with him, he becomes interested in all that Christ has done, and, therefore, is accepted by the Father, even as Christ is, who is his head, and the well-beloved Son of the Father. It was the earnest desire of the apostles, that Jesus might continue with them. But, in his last, and most affecting discourse to his disciples, just before he was betrayed, he tells them that his time was come, and when sorrow had filled their hearts, he showed them the necessity of his departure. “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.” “I go to pre-

pare a place for you." Whilst he was on earth, "the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." His presence in heaven, as our Mediator, is essential for our salvation; it was declared by Jesus to be necessary, in order to procure the Holy Spirit, and to obtain that "place" where "there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face." The Mosaic dispensation illustrates or prefigures the work of our Lord in heaven, for, the high priest entered into the holiest of the tabernacle, to present the blood of the victim, and to make intercession. Now this tabernacle, says the apostle, was a pattern of the things in heaven, whither Jesus has gone to appear in the presence of God for us.

In the day that Adam fell, his soul became dead to every thing which is good, and the souls of his descendents are, naturally, not merely dead to every holy principle, but, to use the strong language of an apostle, are enemies to God. Paul, drawing a comparison between man by nature, as he descends from Adam, and man renewed by the grace of God, declares, that "to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace, because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." If an apostle maintain it to be an impossibility, for those that are in the flesh to please God, we, who have no superior knowledge, will do well to be cautious in rejecting his opinion. But he not only believed, that man could not, of himself, please God, but even, that he could not know how to do so. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;" and, as if all this were not sufficient

to express his opinion, he further most unequivocally avers, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." It does not follow from this, that because man is naturally corrupted, and cannot please God, he therefore does not possess the faculty, of knowing what is right and what is wrong. Holiness is gone from man, but he is still a rational creature, and has the power of judging of the quality of actions. This property, of perceiving what is good and what is evil, exists in different degrees, proportioned to the knowledge and sensibility of individuals, but, both in the Christian and heathen world, this discernment or conscience is found to exist. The consequence of this internal feeling, when not suppressed, is a wish that the right had been performed, and the wrong avoided. This wish, naturally, springs from the desire that every man has, to enjoy peace in his own mind. It arises, sometimes, solely from the pain excited by the reproaches of conscience, but in other cases, it is strengthened, by the contemplation of the happy effects of virtue and moral goodness. Yet, although, in every breast, conscience erect her tribunal, and, although, the consequence must be remorse, as often as her admonitions are neglected, it is nevertheless true, that the feelings, produced by her reproaches, are seldom permanent, or succeeded by an active, persevering, effort of the will to avoid the evil. The wish, which unrenewed men have, to please God, or do good, is nothing more than a wish, founded on dictates of conscience, without any corresponding endeavour, the inclination for present gratification, prevailing over all the suggestions of reason, wisdom, or instruction. There is no man who would not wish to obtain heaven, but none will sacrifice this world for it. By frequent disregard, the voice of conscience comes, at length, to be heard with unconcern. It may be lost

altogether, and the mind become as indifferent to what is right and wrong, as it is dead to true holiness and love to God. The passions and affections of the heart, the force of reason and instruction, the power of habit, the accidental absence of strong temptation, the dictates of conscience, may all conspire, to enable a man, to regulate his life, more becomingly as a moral creature, as we observe in heathen philosophers, and the conduct of many men who are not religious; but they cannot give him the power, of cordially loving God, and of keeping his commandments, they cannot produce a lively faith in Jesus, nor communicate the Holy Spirit, who is so essential, that without him no man can come unto God. The dictates of conscience may make a man a good member of society, they may make him perform many moral duties, but they cannot make him love the law of God, or obey it in preference to solicitations to sin. Adam, having, in one sense, died on the day he fell, he required to be renewed or born again, and we, his descendents, require also to be regenerated or enlivened, which is done by the Spirit of Christ entering into us. The Spirit does not act, merely, by suggesting arguments to convince, or by presenting motives to man, as a free agent, as some have imagined, but, by changing the heart, and sanctifying the desires. Did the Holy Spirit operate, merely, by presenting arguments, I can conceive that the same arguments might have been presented, by one man to another, and that we might be saved, without the interference of the Spirit at all. But, He not only does present motives and inducements, but also, awakens the dead mind, kindles new desires, and gives a new existence. Formerly, the soul was polluted in itself, and the habitation of unclean spirits. Now, it is purified, and, by the union of the Holy Spirit, is made to

know and love God, to look to him as the source of happiness, and to Jesus as the Mediator between God and man. The Divine Spirit dwelt in Jesus without measure, and it is the essential character, of his redeemed children, who are united to him, that they possess the same spirit. They have thus a new nature, and in proportion as the Spirit works in them, and manifests this change, they feel more and more as Jesus felt, and are more conformed to his image, both in aversion from sin, delight in holiness, and love to God. The soul now hates sin, because it is hated by God, loves the holy law of God, and trusts in his grace, for it has obtained by the Spirit, a discovery of the Divine perfections, and of the "truth" which Jesus came to bear witness to, whereas, formerly, the mind was full of error, and did not know, or perceive the true nature of things. In heaven, nothing that maketh a lie shall enter. There, all shall be truth, that is, every thing shall be apprehended and believed, as it really is. The true state shall not only be displayed and known, but also relished, and were we to go no farther into the promise of God, for the security of saints in heaven, we should consider it as confirmed, were it only admitted, that, in that holy place, and sanctified state, they knew the truth, and were, by the continual presence of the Spirit, enabled to relish it and rejoice in it, as the condition determined by God to be best. On earth, the heavenly state must be begun, and the earliest and essential change on the mind, is to know the truth and relish it, not part of the truth, but the whole truth, as connected with the moral government, and perfections of God, with the depravity of the human heart, and the necessity of sanctification, with the danger of sin, and the means of escape, with the value of time, and the importance of eternity. The existence of the change, is to be known

by its effects, which, necessarily, are a discovery of the glory and goodness of God, particularly in the salvation of men, a sense of the danger of sin, and deep sorrow for its prevalence, firm faith in Jesus, love springing from faith, obedience springing from love. The communication of the Holy Spirit, or that change called regeneration, or the renewing by the Holy Spirit, is the root or origin of the christian life, and he who hopes to be saved, or who claims the character of a Christian, without understanding this change, and viewing it as the primary and essential step in his salvation, has yet every thing to learn. Faith, love, and obedience are the effects of this regeneration and sanctification, by the Spirit of God, bestowed for the sake of Jesus Christ, and through him as Redeemer. This doctrine of regeneration, by the Spirit, is not very agreeable to the pride of man, or the vanity of philosophy, and, consequently it has met with much opposition; but, in all questions of religion, we have no source of information, but the Scriptures, and are bound to believe, and ought to receive with thankfulness, every communication made to us in them. The apostle Paul, draws a short, but striking, comparison between our first parent and our Restorer. "The first man Adam, was made a living soul, the second Adam, a quickening spirit." That is, Adam in his state of innocence had, by his constitution, the power of living, and of enjoying God, but having by transgression lost that, Jesus procured for him, and his posterity, a new spirit, even the Spirit of God. Paul addresses himself to Christians, as if this were a thing so evidently necessary, that they could not hesitate on the subject. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you;" "And you, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quick-

ened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." We thus live in and by Christ, who dwelleth in us, and makes us holy. Without the presence of the Spirit, the sacrifice of Jesus should be of no avail, more than food could be useful to the body, which wanted the principle of life. Viewing man, in his natural state, we may well exclaim, "Can these dry bones live?" Man must be indeed born again or renewed, a doctrine that is expressly insisted on, both by Jesus and his apostles. Jesus saith, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." Man, vain and ignorant, may dispute the fact, and deride the principle, but in so doing, he contends with his Maker and Redeemer, who hath expressly declared, "Because I live, ye shall live also." It is only because Jesus liveth, that we live. On another occasion we find Jesus uttering this solemn truth, "Behold the hour is coming, and now is, in which, those who are in the grave, shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and they who hear shall live." This does not refer to the resurrection, for the hour "now is." The apostles follow up the same doctrine, and every where speak of it, both as an established fact, admitted by all who had been taught by them, and, also, as a source of future joy. "When Christ who is our life shall appear," says Paul in one of his exhortations, "then shall ye also appear with him in glory." He talks of crucifying the old man—of being "renewed in the Holy Ghost,"—of living in "newness of life;" expressions which can only mean, that if any man be in Christ, he has become a new creature, having received spiritual life and gladness, and is begotten, again, to a lively hope, of another and a blessed existence.

But the Spirit of God not only enlivens, but must also sanctify us, enlighten our understanding, and

enable us to receive, with cordial faith, Jesus as our Redeemer. If it be made out, that man is dead in sin and requires to be quickened, we conceive all the rest must follow of course. For, the mind which requires to be made alive, cannot previously be holy or enlightened, or capable of faith or activity. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit, to guide his disciples "into all truth," "for he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you." And the constant prayer of his apostles for their converts was, that the Spirit might open the eyes of their understanding, sanctify them wholly, enable them to "wait for the hope of righteousness by faith," and seal them to the day of full and complete redemption. The Scripture represents men as not merely wicked in their own nature, but under the power and dominion of the devil, who exercises the same influence over their souls, for their destruction, which the Divine Spirit, does over the souls of Christians, for their preservation. It was to procure liberty to those captives, that Jesus descended from heaven, and his gospel is given, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," to procure for them, in place of the spirit of bondage, the Spirit of God, "and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Thus, is Jesus "made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

As Jesus became the substitute of the human race, that race can only be accepted through him, and whoever is saved, can only be saved, by what he hath done in his name. Jesus took not on him, says Paul, the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. The seed of Abraham then are punished in the person of Christ, and justified in the person of Christ. But this is not all; the Divine Spirit which dwelt in the man Jesus, is communicated also to them, to sanctify and unite them to Christ, making them a

part of his spiritual body, and partakers of the divine nature ; they are made sons, even as Christ is a son, being adopted as children, and permitted to call God their father. The Holy Spirit is given to them, to quicken, enlighten, and sanctify them, and to join them to the Lord. We thus read in the epistles of Paul, " God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that are under the curse of the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons ; and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father, wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God, through Christ." And, in another place, he compares the state of man, by nature and by Christ, asserting, that those who are in the flesh, that is, merely descendents of Adam, cannot please God. But, he adds, as the condition of Christians, " ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." And again, " He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause, he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, Behold I and the children which God hath given me." Adoption and sanctification, then, are as essential doctrines as that of justification ; they are the necessary consequences of the communication of the Spirit. It follows, also, that they who possess the Spirit, are for ever safe, as no power, either of the devil or of their own heart, can prevail over the Spirit. They are as safe on earth, as they shall be in heaven. The great security of Christians is, that every thing which Christ as Redeemer possesses, is possessed by them, through the Spirit uniting them to Christ. They suffer in him—they are righteous in him—they are holy in him—they are beloved in him—they live in him—they are part of him, and possess all that his human nature possessed. The

Divine Spirit, which dwelt in him, dwells also in them, and they can no more perish, than his human soul can perish. They are changed into the image of Christ. Had Jesus taken on him the nature of angels, and had it been consistent with the divine perfection, that man had been thus redeemed, he would have changed his nature, and become a different being altogether, even an angel. Forasmuch, therefore, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, Jesus also took part of the same, that he might redeem man in the form of a man ; otherwise, though he might have been changed into a different being, he should not have been redeemed as man. The work of sanctification, is truly the communication of the Spirit, and the consequence of this is, that the same mind which was in Christ, is in the Christian. Sanctification may be considered either in its principle or effects, or absolutely and relatively. In its principle, it consists in the presence of the Spirit, and, in this absolute view, all Christians are on the same footing. In its effects, however, there is a difference, for these are more powerful, in some than in others, and are so ordered, as to bear a proportion, to the efforts of the Christian. These effects, appearing in the conduct and affections, constituting what may be called relative sanctification, are never carried to perfection in this life. But, nevertheless, it is the duty of every one, to aspire towards this perfection, by considering, how Christ would have acted in his situation, during every moment of life ; for they who profess to have the Spirit of Christ, must also have the principles which actuated his mind.

If this doctrine be true, and, so far as language can establish principles of belief, it is proved to be true, it very naturally follows, that our salvation must be the gift of God. “ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be

the propitiation for our sins." We do not first love God, and come unto him, but he is the author, as well as the finisher, of faith. It must be so, otherwise the language of Scripture, respecting the depravity of the heart, the enmity of the mind to God, and the soul being dead in sin, is calculated to mislead us, and give rise to erroneous conclusions. The doctrine of election, then, may be deduced from the apostolical positions, already laid down, and, actually is so, by Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians. Reminding them, that they were "dead in trespasses and sins, and had walked, according to the course of this world," he concludes, that "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he loved us, hath quickened us together with Christ, that in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Can any thing be more explicit than this? But the same apostle, in this letter, not merely tells the Ephesians, that they were saved by grace, but, also, that they had been "chosen before the foundation of the world;" and well might he maintain this, for Jesus himself had, even before his departure, established this doctrine. In his memorable prayer to the Father, before he was betrayed, he acknowledges having received a certain number; and, in the course of his address, uses this pointed expression, "I have manifested thy name, unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me." "I pray for them, I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." There are two descriptions then of men, one for whom Jesus does not pray, one for whom he does not intercede as their Redeemer, and another of whom he saith, "for their sakes I sanctify, or consecrate,

myself, that they also might be sanctified, through the truth." Even the intercessory prayer on the cross, "Father, forgive them," cannot be considered as an unlimited application, in behalf of the Jews, concerned in the crucifixion. To suppose so, would be to believe that the prayer of Christ was not at all times, and in every case, effectual. For, we have no reason to hope, that every individual, so concerned, was spiritually saved, nor was the nation, collectively, spared from exemplary punishment, still inflicted. The prayer, with regard to individuals, could only be considered as a desire, and a desire effectual and all prevailing, that, for his sake, the purposes of mercy might still be carried on, with regard to such of his persecutors as should believe, and that the Jews should still, according to the promise, be continued as a chosen nation, and ultimately rejoice in him as their Messiah. That the prayer will be heard we have no doubt. Israel shall again inhabit Judea, and when the Spirit takes away the veil, and shows Jesus to be the promised and spiritual Messiah, the nation, by the power, and sure, though invisible, guidance of their King, who is on high, shall be re-established in the land of their fathers.

The knowledge of God is infinite; his perfection, and his power without bounds. He hath created this world in wisdom, and he hath appointed all its times, and its seasons. Long before it was formed, he knew, and determined, its existence and duration. The inhabitants who dwell upon it have been numbered by him, and even their thoughts, and the imagination of their hearts, have not at any period, however remote, been hid from him. By his providence, he preserveth all things, and ruleth his creatures, for his glory and their good; whatever shall befall them is foreseen by him; the number of their days is known. He who admits the omniscience

of God, must admit, that events, removed to the most distant period of futurity, are now, and always have been, present to his view. He who admits the foreknowledge of God, must also admit his predetermination ; for that which is foreseen, must eventually take place. The doctrine of Providence, general and particular, is founded on the omniscience of God, by whom all things, even the most minute circumstance, which ever has occurred, or ever is to occur, must be at all times perceived, and the mutual relation, of every incident, whether past, present, or to come, in the intellectual and material world, must be known. If one thought, of any individual, who is yet to exist, be unknown, the perfection of the Deity is destroyed. It may be supposed, that although, God does foresee, yet he does not predetermine ; but this supposition leads to the doctrine, that all things are left to chance, or some accidental operation of various causes, which may produce effects, either eventually good or bad, as circumstances may turn out. Few will maintain this position, they will qualify it by saying, that God will regulate circumstances, so as ultimately to prove beneficial ; if so, regulation implies predetermination. No one who admits prescience, as a perfection of God, can deny the certainty of the event which is foreseen ; for if it be not certain, it cannot be foreseen. The only question then must be, whether it be predetermined first, and therefore certain and foreseen, or, if it be merely foreseen, because it is certainly, and necessarily, to happen in the order of things. This is a distinction without a difference, and if it be intended to inquire, which is the cause and which the effect, with regard to the Divine mind, it is an inquiry, founded on the nature of man, and not of God. Much of the difficulty of this subject, arises from the error, of applying the same rules to the infinite, that we do the finite, mind. We must

not reason as if any one circumstance, past, present, or to come, were less present to God at one time than at another. We cannot comprehend the infinite mind; but this much we can understand, that the doctrine in question is almost a necessary deduction from the infinitude of God. God does not view and know, as finite minds, but has every part of eternity present to his mind at once; and his knowledge is not like that of mortals, derived from ratiocination or observation, but, intuitively, by one act of mind which embraces all things at once. To talk of cause and effect, with regard to God, is talking as if his mind were like ours. Two operations of mind cannot be simultaneous, and yet stand in relation of cause and effect. To the Deity, the past, the present, and the future, are alike known. The whole life and conduct of the man yet unborn, is now as well known and as visible to God, as it will be when it takes place, or after his death. Every part of it, therefore, must be fixed and certain, and if the doctrine of a providence be admitted at all, if, when born he be under the superintendence of God, who will order what is right, and number his days, it is evident, that, at the present moment, the operation of this providence is determined. The existence of a Providence, and the doctrine of predestination, must stand or fall together. This system of Providence, has been supposed to destroy the liberty of man, and to reduce him to a mere machine. But this opinion is founded, upon a limited view, of the perfection of God. Every man feels that he is a free agent—every man in his ordinary transactions, and the course of his life, reasons, and acts, on the known operation of causes. If he fall into the river, he knows, that when he sinks, he shall be drowned, but if he can get out, he shall be saved. He does not, at that instant, argue, that if it be predetermined that he shall be

saved, he may allow himself to sink. He makes every effort to save himself. The result, at that moment, is known to God alone, it was known before the world was created. The cause of his danger, the efforts he made to escape, the effect of these, were all foreseen, and determined, before he himself existed, and yet this knowledge, he did not possess, and was not at all influenced by. In all the ordinary transactions of life, in the various pursuits of man, we calculate the result, by the operation of known principles and causes, and, in general, he who acts most wisely, acts most successfully. Nevertheless, the whole is under the guidance of Providence, and in many instances, the interposition of this Providence, is signally manifested, by the discomfiture of the best concerted plan, usually by the accession of circumstances, which could neither be foreseen, nor prevented, by the wisdom of man. God, who is the first cause of all things, has so constituted the material and intellectual world, that the operations in both, are carried on by a connected chain of causes, each effect, produced by a preceding cause, becoming a cause, to a succeeding effect. The causes, however, operating on matter and on mind are very different; those operating on the former, being mechanical, in the most extended sense of the word—those acting on the latter, being moral. Matter, is acted on, in consequence of being in itself passive. Mind, is operated on, by its peculiar causes, from being naturally free, obeying or resisting the motives or causes, according to the determination of the judgment and passions. The whole effects, of efficient causes, on a given quantity of matter, for a limited time, might be known and calculated, by a finite mind, which possessed superlative knowledge, of mathematics, natural philosophy and chemistry. But a complete knowledge, or foresight of the successive actions and

reactions of causes, in the material world, from the first impression, received from the Almighty hand, till the end of time, can only be possessed and comprehended by the Deity. The apparently accidental motion of a grain of sand, if all the circumstances connected with it were known, might often appear, as evidently, under the immediate direction of Providence, as the desolating eruption of a volcano, or the opening of the earth, at the precise time, when it could do the least injury, or accomplish the greatest destruction, according to the purposes of God. To him all things are alike easy. With equal facility he arrests the fall of the rock, till the passenger has escaped, or commands the sun to continue shining, for an unusual period, that the Amorites might be destroyed.

If a philosopher knew all the causes, operating on matter, within a limited space and time, and their powers and relations, he might, as matter is passive, calculate the natural effects. But, with the mind, it is far otherwise. Although he knew all the moral causes acting on a mind, yet, he could not calculate the effects; for the mind is free and active, and the same effect is not produced, on every mind, by the same motive. He might conjecture, from a general knowledge of the constitution of the mind, or, from experience of the general influence of similar causes, but to do more, than conjecture, is beyond his power. God, however, not only foreknew, every rational soul which was to exist, but also all the moral causes, which should operate on them, and the effects which these should produce. If we confine our view to the temporal condition of man, we shall see much ground to conclude, that moral causes are so controlled and directed, by the providence of God, as to tend, by their influence on the passions and opinions of men, to promote the comfort of individuals, and

the prosperity of nations. If, again, we turn our attention to the effects produced by the operation of causes on the mind, in relation to religion or the service of God, there can be no doubt, that these effects would be foreseen to be evil in their general result, and that, purely, in consequence of the freedom of the human will. This is evident, if we admit the scripture doctrine, of the depravity of the soul after the fall, for, out of a corrupt tree, must proceed corrupt fruit, and moral motives, operating on a sinful creature, never can make that creature do, what it is not, naturally, in his power to do. We are then led to this conclusion, that if the soul, being depraved, requires to be sanctified, this sanctification is the gift of God, and must be foreseen and predetermined, respecting the individual who is to enjoy it. The Spirit of God not only presents motives to the mind, but impels the mind to yield to these, giving a new disposition to that soul which is chosen by God. Accordingly, our Saviour says, Many are called, but few are chosen—ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. And John, after showing, that love to God, is the effect produced by the Spirit of God, declares, that God loveth us, before we love him. If we admit the agency of a Divine Providence, in the regulation of temporal affairs, it would be foolish to deny a similar superintendence, in the spiritual world. If God knew from the first, every individual he intended to create, he must also have known, how he was to think and act. To the infinite mind, there has, from all eternity, been a minute view of all that was to befall him—of his whole moral conduct—of the means of knowledge and of grace he should possess, and of the effect of these upon his heart and affections. When Satan, the first and great enemy of God, was created, his rebellion was foreseen, and his punishment decreed, else were the knowledge

and governance of the Almighty limited. The fall of man, and the scheme of redemption, were open, to the mind of God, ages before the world had existence. The constant machinations of Satan, for the destruction of the souls of men, as well as the means by which these may be counteracted, are known to God, together with the effects that they shall produce, on every individual. There must, therefore, even from all eternity, have been a separation of men into two classes—one for mercy, another for condemnation. The apostle gives us a clear view, of the operation of God, with regard to those who shall be saved. “For, whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son; moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Peter, addresses his epistles to those who were “elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” Paul, blessed God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for having “chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy,” and speaks of our “being predestinated, according to the purpose of him who worketh all things, according to the counsel of his own will.” God, does not merely foresee, who shall accept the offers of salvation, but must also determine. He might have ordained, that all men should receive, with cordial faith, the doctrines of the gospel. This is undeniable, but, it is no less certain that he hath not done so. All are by nature equally unworthy, equally unable to love and glorify God. It is then of his mercy that any are saved. It is he who affords the means of grace, which are to be effectual. Paul was foreknown and chosen, before he had existence, but he was not called by one of the

ordinary means ; he was called by a supernatural event, in the occurrence of which he had no operation. The events and circumstances which, in our days, give rise, in the heart, to the desire of salvation, though not of the same nature, are, as certainly, appointed by God, and ordained to be the means of conversion. The same means are afforded to various men, but only a part improve them. It does not, however, from this follow, that man is not free to act, or is absolved from responsibility, for his conduct. In all temporal affairs, he feels at liberty to act, according to the dictates of his judgment ; and, though persuaded of the government of Providence, he knows, that the providence is carried on, by the operation of causes. He seeks those which shall be favourable, he shuns those, which shall be adverse, to his hopes and desires. The same holds true of man, viewed in relation to religion. He possesses the principle of reason, a variety of affections and desires, with the power of judging of the consequence of their indulgence. He has, within him, a conscience which can estimate the quality of his conduct, and in many instances, he has a more full revelation of the will of God, with numerous and repeated means of improvement. In the general tenor of his life, in the choice of his conduct in every particular case, he feels that his own judgment influences him, his desires and deliberations sway him ; he is conscious, either of consenting to evil, or aspiring to good.

We know that the atonement, made by Christ, is infinite, or unlimited, in its value, and, abstractly considered, is adequate to the redemption of a whole world. But, it no more follows, that the virtue of the atonement, should be exercised, to its full competency, than, that the power of the Almighty, should, in a single case, be put forth to its full extent.

In every instance, the display has been just as much as, and no more than, the wisdom of God saw meet, for the purpose to be served, but, as that which is infinite, cannot be bounded, so, in no case, has the power of God, been manifested to its utmost limit. Now, although the value and virtue of Christ's work be infinite, yet, it does not follow, that all are saved by it. If any perish, and we know that some do perish, it is evident, that this work is limited in the application, or actual efficacy. But as God is omnipotent and prescient, we must not say that the efficacy of the atonement is contingent, or, that Christ died to accomplish that which he did not accomplish, or failed, in any degree, in his purpose of mercy, with regard to a single individual. Possessing the Divine nature, he foreknew, before the foundation of the world, those who should believe in him, and this immense multitude, satisfying the great Redeemer, for the travail of his soul, constituted a body, for which he died, and not one individual, belonging to which, can be lost. All this multitude, even the youngest and most remote individual, the last to be rescued, before the trumpet sound, and time be no more, was present to the knowledge of the Godhead, from everlasting, and formed that elect church, for which, and for which alone, Christ died; for both reason and revelation contradict the opinion, that Christ saves the impenitent, or made a propitiatory sacrifice for those who perish. To maintain, it, would be to assert, either that the propitiation was inadequate, or that God extended his pardon to all, but yet punished many, for whom pardon, or indemnity, had been purchased. The redeemed were as certainly, in the counsel and sight of God, a part of the body of Christ, before the foundation of the world, and at the hour of the crucifixion, as at the day of their conversion, or at the time when they

join the blessed in heaven. There never was, and never could be, any contingency, respecting the number, the names, or the safety of those, who, united to Christ, and forming his spiritual body as a church, become interested in, and identified with, all that he did as their head and representative. Blessed ground of hope and security !

It has been supposed, by some, that the doctrine of election, gives rise to indolence, as they who are elected, must obtain life, and they who are not, need not aspire to it. But men are called to repent, to believe, to love, to act. The call, is, to them, as rational and active creatures. It is not anywhere said, that the powers of the mind, are to remain unemployed, and that the Spirit of God alone shall act. Were it so, a man could have no more concern in the operation, than a machine. When it is said, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," is it not said, "act?" The very reception of salvation implies an act. The act must be of the mind itself. From first to last, the mind is called to exercise itself; without this, there can be no faith, no sanctification, no love, no step in Christianity. Whatever opinion be held with regard to election, all must agree, that Christianity is a religion, which not only implies, but demands, an active state of mind; all feel that they have a will, desires, opinions, and passions. These, they are called on to employ in the service of God, and, are required, by an act of the mind, to accept the offer of salvation, and to believe in Jesus. These operations of the mind, are assisted and strengthened, by the Spirit, who works both to will and to do. The mind must go along with the influence of the Spirit. All who admit the doctrine of original sin, of the corruption of human nature, do admit the influence of the Spirit; and, amongst these, the only

difference, is to be referred to the question, whether man first seeks the Spirit, or the Spirit is first, of grace, given to man. The difference, in point of fact, is great, and can only be determined by Scripture; but, practically, the result is the same; for every one is called to repent, and believe, and pray for the Spirit; and no man can, by attending to his mind, ascertain whether his supplication for mercy, proceed from spontaneous feeling, or from inward influence of the Spirit.

It appears very early to have been started, as an objection, to the doctrine of election, that if God, instead of willing the salvation of the whole human race, permitted one class of men to remain in their natural ignorance and depravity, they who remained in this state, were not to blame. The apostle, was aware of this, and in one of his strongest passages on the subject, has this expression, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then, why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will? Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed, say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"

The Scripture is to be considered, as containing a system of information, divisible into two heads. The one, relates to the will and affections, to the moral conduct and active powers; the other, refers to the conduct of God, and his agency, in the salvation of men. A limited view, of the passages of Scripture, relating to these two heads, must give rise, sometimes, to opposite opinions; and, a comparison of texts, without keeping this in view, would make one appear to be in contradiction to the other. In one place, for instance, it is said, "come unto me;" and in another, "no man can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him." The one, is

directing what God requires of man. The other, speaks of what God does respecting man. Thus, it is easy to reconcile those passages, which, explicitly, state the doctrine of election and free grace, with those, which inculcate the necessity of efforts of the human mind.

The doctrine of election, and of the free gift of salvation to the elect, is explicitly maintained, in the passages I have already brought forward, and is farther supported by an illustration, made use of by Paul, taken from the history of Jacob and Esau, of whom God said, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Now, says Paul, the children, not being yet born, neither having done any good or evil, the declaration was made, that "the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth." Thus, clearly demonstrating, that the elect are chosen of the free grace of God, and not on account of any thing they have done, for they are chosen to be good, and not because they are good. Our Saviour did not come into the world to die for men, who might, or who might not, accept of him, but he came to redeem a definite number of men, given unto him. Accordingly, he says, "I have manifested thy name, unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world." "Holy Father, keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me." And in the same address, to God the Father, he declares that he had received power, to "give eternal life, to as many as thou hast given him."

All the doctrines of the gospel are intimately dependent on each other. The foundation of the whole, is the depravity of the heart of man, or original sin. On this, is built, the necessity of an atonement, of justification, of regeneration or sanctification, of adoption by free grace, and of election, which is merely a branch of the doctrine of grace.

CHAPTER III.

OF WHAT IS REQUIRED OF MAN THAT HE MAY OBTAIN
A FUTURE STATE OF HAPPINESS.

Now, seeing that the new world is obtained, by the atonement, obedience, and intercession of Jesus, and the sanctifying influence of his Spirit, let us next inquire what is required of us, or, rather, what we are enabled to do, that we may obtain salvation, and possess the world to come.

Men are saved by the mercy or grace of God, on account of what hath been done by Christ. But, either this salvation must be extended to all men indiscriminately, or, it must be confined to a certain description of character. The first supposition, would confound all distinction between the good and the bad, and is in contradiction both to reason and revelation. What then is the character of those who partake of this salvation, and what is the change produced in them, in order that they may have the qualification belonging to those who are to be saved. For, if all men are not to be saved indiscriminately, and if no man can be saved on account of his own righteousness, else there had been no need of a Saviour, there must be some quality peculiar to the redeemed; and this must be acknowledged by all, whether they maintain it to be acquired by the man himself, or communicated as a gift from God. It must be some state of the mind, for religion is altogether seated in the mind or soul. Man, is required to believe the history of Jesus, and in this belief, and

its attendant change, or sanctification of the heart, we find the quality required. But this belief is not a mere speculative assent, nor a persuasion of the truth of one part of the history of Jesus, or one single particular in his work. It does not restrict itself simply to the sacrifice of Jesus, considered abstractly, but embraces, all the display of the divine character, and perfections, connected with it. We are carried back, as it were, to the time, when, at the fall of man, God first made known, in heaven, the everlasting covenant of grace. We behold a holy and a just God, requiring the punishment of sin, yet, willing to have mercy on the sinner. We see the Son, even then, manifesting his love and compassion, by coming forward as the Mediator, and offering to become the sacrifice. At almost one glance, we take into our view the blessed work of Christ, from its very beginning. We see the heavenly things, which were afterwards made known to sinners, by "patterns" purified with blood. We follow the Saviour through his ministration, during all the ceremonial law, during his abode on earth, amidst suffering and death, and accompany him back to heaven, where, within the temple on high, we still see him making intercession for sin, and sending forth to the weakest and poorest of his people, the continual influence of his Holy Spirit. When we thus behold the past and the present, and have presented to us the full work of Jesus, in all its power and unceasing performance, we indeed feel a hope and a confidence, a peace and a joy, in that scheme of redemption, which satisfies God, satisfies man, and provides for him that Holy Spirit who alone can renew and sanctify the heart, and destroy the power of sin. He who heartily believes that God hates sin, and, on account of it, required, even the sacrifice of his Son, must hate and avoid sin, in proportion to the liveliness and

strength of his belief and conviction. He who believes that Jesus came to deliver him from the power and the punishment of sin, must seek to be released from its dominion, and must exert those powers which God hath given him. But let us inquire, a little more minutely, into the nature of that state of mind, which characterises the Christian, and how, and by what agency, it is produced.

The first thing required of us is repentance. Without this we cannot begin, far less prosecute our course for heaven. We may deceitfully imagine that we are in the right path, but the termination shall be in disappointment. There is no road to happiness, no path to heaven, but that single one which begins from repentance. When Jesus, in whom we trust for redemption, sent out his disciples to preach to men, the subject was prescribed; it was "that they should repent." When he appeared to the apostles after his resurrection, he proved to them the necessity of his sufferings, in coincidence with the Scriptures, and he explained their intention or object to be, "that repentance, and remission of sins should be preached in his name." The order is established by reason, and is ordained by a still higher authority—by Jesus himself. Repentance, is to precede remission, and he who does not first repent, never can receive remission; he shall die in his sins. On the day of Pentecost, Peter delivered a most animated discourse on the salvation of Jesus Christ, which by the divine blessing, had the effect of making his audience cry out with earnestness, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" His reply began, with this admonition, "Repent." This was the first thing they were to do, and it is the first thing every man must do, who hopes to be saved. God "commandeth all men, every where, to repent." The order is universal, and he who hopes to enter

the road to happiness by any other gate than that of repentance, shall either in the course or at the conclusion, of his journey, find himself most dreadfully deceived. Repentance, is not a duty confined to those, who have committed enormous and repeated crimes. It is required of every sinner, for, in the sight of God, there is not such a thing as a small sin, neither is there any son of Adam, who has not, every hour, ample ground for repentance.

Repentance is essential to salvation, but it is not an atonement and propitiation. It is not a sacrifice, to be offered, to appease the wrath of God. It is not an indemnification for past sins, else, we must either construct a scale, of the various degrees of intensity of repentance, adapted to the innumerable varieties of supposed criminality, or, we must assign to the simple act of repentance, an efficacy, commensurate with the sufferings of Christ. It is not a substitute for the work of Christ, but it is the very first step in the great change, which the Spirit, procured by that mighty work, is to produce on the human soul.

Repentance, is not simply regret for having sinned; it is not merely a purpose of turning from evil to good, or reformation; but it is both of these conjoined. It is known to be genuine and sincere from its effects. It follows conviction, for he who is not convinced that he has done wrong, cannot repent of his actions. Conviction, proceeds from impressive views of the general evil of sin, which are always connected with a lively sense of the holiness of God, who will not suffer sin, nor permit it to pass unpunished. The first step in conversion, is a discovery of the holy nature of God, and the strictness and purity of his law. There can be no conviction, till there be just and feeling views, of the glory and perfection of God, and of the requisition made by him. God

is infinite in purity, and must hate sin as his opposite. There can be no fear in the heart of a sinner, there can be no dread, respecting sin, in the mind of any man, till he, feelingly, believe in the infinite holiness and glory of God. In proportion to the justness of his conceptions, respecting the character and majesty of God, will be his terror at sin, his consciousness of danger, his anxiety for deliverance, his fear to offend. Every being must hate sin in proportion to his purity. The Christian, on earth, hates it accordingly as he is sanctified, but not as he shall do in heaven; but no being can hate sin as God does, who is infinite in holiness, who cannot be reconciled to sin, or overlook it, any more than things infinitely contrary to one another can agree. Sooner, may feeble man, stop the motions of the universe, than expect that God will restrain his wrath against sin. His displeasure against it is infinite, and it must be punished, either in the person of the sinner, or of a substitute. No man, who has a just and strong impression, of the purity of God, can lightly commit sin, or approach iniquity without trembling. These views of God, and of sin, are feelingly applied by the penitent to himself. He sees that *he* has offended God, and that *he* is in danger of punishment. Conviction, implies a knowledge that God has given a law which he has broken. This is a proposition to which every one gives assent, but assent does not constitute conviction. This is a term taken from judicial procedure, and implies that the guilt is proved, and the criminal ready for sentence. The trial is conducted, before his own conscience, as judge, and the sentence, is neither more nor less than utter destruction. Besides the assent to the proposition, that he, as an individual, has broken the law of God, he must feel convicted, he must feel the danger to be great, to be urgent beyond the power of language to express. If he do not

consider sin to be thus dreadful in its consequences, the danger to be thus great and immediate, he is not properly convicted by his own judgment. If he be, the natural consequence is "to flee from the wrath to come."

There is a great difference between assenting to the truth of the proposition, and feeling the force of it, and following the impulse arising from that feeling. A man may admit that he is intemperate, and that intemperance must destroy him, but the admission may have no influence on his conduct. No one can say that this man is sufficiently alarmed, or alive to his danger. If he be truly convinced of his hazard, if he see the grave ready to receive him, he will not make, merely, an occasional attempt to become sober, but his efforts and resolution will be strenuous and persevering, his cry will be vehement, what can I yet do to be saved? The same holds true with regard to a conviction of sin. The voice of conscience may be heard occasionally; it may cause apprehension, but instead of following it, we may say, "Go thy way for this time." If it be heard with effect, if it be obeyed, the result is repentance.

Conviction, may be produced by different causes, and under a variety of circumstances, all of which may have existed before, without producing any such effect. The loss of friends, or of health, some dreadful calamity, a series of disappointments, the fear of immediate death, or the anticipation of its approach at some uncertain period, the reproaches and reproofs of the judgment, or other causes peculiar to individuals, may operate on the mind, and produce conviction and repentance. But these must be under the blessing of God, and the regulation and assistance of his Spirit; for the assent of the judgment, and the fits of terror these may occasion, cannot be effectual, unless conscience be convicted and awakened. In

this case, we ourselves feel no miraculous constraint, but the Spirit of God operates through the faculties and passions of the human mind. Nevertheless, this operation does not consist, in the Spirit, merely, appealing to the judgment and passions, to produce conviction, and its subsequent effect, but He also changes the bias of the heart, and disposes it to act aright, and the mind to receive the truth. Repentance, then, is a free gift of the Spirit. He who stifles the voice of conscience, and discourages conviction, has no solid reason to expect, that God will always strive with him, for his deliverance. He who listens to the admonitions of his judgment, and anxiously seeks deliverance, shall receive that which he solicits, and may be assured, that he who hath begun a good work, will carry it on to perfection. The influence which spirits, good and bad, have over the human mind, though mysterious, is not to be doubted. Both the divine Spirit, and the evil spirit, can and do operate, on the will of man, bending his thoughts and passions to their own purposes. The one, employing such motives as shall influence the free mind to good, the other, to evil. Satan, holds the soul of fallen man in bondage, and although conscience may reprove, and the passion of fear be excited, yet, so long as he is permitted to exercise his power, no reformation can take place. There are two causes forbidding it, the natural bias of the mind, and the agency of the devil. Repentance, then, is the gift of God, who translates us from the power of darkness, into the kingdom of his dear Son, and it is well styled a saving grace.

The influence we yield to, and the sentiments we encourage, naturally lead either to a continuance in evil, or a progress on towards good. Whether particular intentions to repent, arise from the suggestions of the Spirit of God, or from the influence of

conscience, is a point which the individual never can, by consideration, determine, and which it would be of no practical importance to him to discover. For we know, on the one hand, that the Spirit may give many calls, and at last be grieved, and cease to interfere, and, on the other, that no man cries for deliverance, and is refused. If he feel, and encourage, desires for salvation, it is not to be a question with him whether these be effectual or vain. He may be assured of one thing, that they do not spring from a corrupt principle of the heart, nor from Satan, but are of the Lord, and if encouraged, shall terminate in genuine repentance.

Faith in Jesus Christ, is naturally an attendant on "repentance from dead works." There can be no true faith without repentance, and there can be no true repentance without faith. These two acts of the mind are coeval, though not equal in their operation. There may be much sorrow for sin, strong desires to turn to God, when there is little faith discernible, but still this principle of faith has, even at first, an operation. For it is difficult to conceive a christian repentance, without some hope of acceptance, and there can be no hope without a Saviour.

When Peter had, by a sermon, made his hearers cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" he instantly returned for answer, "Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." And when the same question was put to Paul by the jailer, he, taking repentance for granted, as a thing which must accompany faith, replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

No man who heard Paul, or the other apostles preach, could, no man who has the Scriptures given him, can, hope to be saved, if he do not believe in Jesus. He is to believe, that he who was God came down from heaven, and took upon him the form of

man, being united to a human soul. That he obeyed the divine law, which he had broken, suffered the punishment which he deserved, and purchased him, with his own blood, to be one of his redeemed people. He is to believe, that without him there is no salvation, that through him he is sanctified and renewed, by the Holy Spirit, and is accepted by the Father, having his righteousness imputed to him. He may believe, that is, yield an assent to the truth of this doctrine of salvation, and yet may not be saved. The devils themselves believe. Faith is not merely a full and cordial assent, to the doctrines of the gospel, but an active principle, influencing the powers of the mind, and the actions of life.

But, although belief in Jesus, and reliance on him, be necessary to salvation, yet faith is not the cause of our salvation, nor the condition on which we are saved. Faith is an act of the mind, as well as benevolence to man, or love to God, and man can no more be saved on account of his faith, as a thing meritorious, than he can be saved by fasting. He is not to be saved without faith, but he is as little to be saved on account of it. He is saved by grace, that is, by favour or mercy. This mercy gave him a Saviour, this mercy granted him repentance, communicated to him faith, and all the blessings obtained through Christ. Salvation is a free gift to man, but it is procured by Jesus. He is the mean, salvation is the end, but to us the gift is free. We cannot procure it, we cannot deserve it. Salvation is given to man freely, and entirely, of the grace of God. The means that he hath appointed, do not depend on us, but are such as are most conducive to his glory, and best accord with his attributes. We are "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." "For, if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God,

and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." Paul, who through the Spirit of God, understood well the doctrine of salvation, invariably maintains that the obedience and sufferings of our Lord are the means, and the only means of our salvation; that Jesus, to men at large, is the unspeakable gift of God, and that salvation through him to individuals, is a free gift, from his rich mercy.

We are not saved by faith, more than by works, but we are saved through faith given unto us. Paul, in addressing the Philippians, says, that unto them "it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." Their sufferings were not more certainly appointed by his providence, or given unto them, than was their belief or faith. Faith is no more the cause of our redemption, than the power of feeling is the cause of our being warm without heat. But though not the cause of it, it is essentially necessary to it; and therefore the same apostle who says, "by grace are ye saved," says also, "a man is justified by faith."

The scripture doctrine is, that as Christ died in our stead, we are accepted in his person. His church, or assembly of the elect, is represented as his body, and individual Christians as members of it. This is the ground of hope, the source of security, to Christians. Through Christ, as their spiritual head, they have exceeding great and precious promises, being made partakers of the divine nature. The apostle says, "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus"—"now are ye the body of Christ and members in particular"—"know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ"—"we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones"—and "ye are complete in Him." In various places he talks of our state by nature, and our renovation by grace: our old man being

“crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed.” “I am crucified with Christ,” says Paul; “nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.” We are no longer enemies to God, nor guilty in his sight—we are washed—we are sanctified—we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. We are still in the likeness of our fallen parent, but the change shall extend even to our bodies; “as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” Christ shall fashion our vile bodies like unto his glorious body. Most astonishing condescension, most wonderful change! These bodies, laid in the grave, and mouldering into dust, shall be raised, glorious and shining, like that of the man Christ Jesus. The change has begun in the soul. It is created anew in Christ Jesus. We feel the change. Sin is no longer imputed to us, though it is not yet subdued in us. “I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Christ Jesus our Lord.” No man knew the doctrine of salvation better than Paul, who dwelt largely on this great change, and on the imputation of righteousness connected with it. And as a proof of the doctrine, he brings forward David, as describing “the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose

sins are covered. Blessed is the man, to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Now, how is this blessing obtained but by our being accepted in the person of Christ, and being united unto him. Was it not for this purpose that David prayed, "Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." This must be the work of God. When it is accomplished, we then "have put on the new man, which is created in knowledge, after the image of him who created him"—we then are without fault, and blameless before God—we are then not beheld, even for a moment, as we are in ourselves, but as we are in the beloved Son of God. When man becomes a new creature, he is accepted, but not until that be accomplished. By his own righteousness, which, alas! is little indeed, he never can be accepted, and he can no more become worthy in the sight of God—he can no more create a clean heart in himself, than he can create a new body. The one is a work of creation as much as the other; and he who cannot add one cubit to his stature, can far less change the heart, and be transformed by the renewing of his mind. Man is to be saved, for God hath so decreed it, by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, through faith, which is given unto him by grace.

The change produced on the Christian is aptly called regeneration, and he is said to be born again, for his nature is changed, and he is a different kind of being from what he was before. He formerly was a sinful human soul, the habitation of unclean spirits. Now he is a purified soul, partaking of the Divine nature, by the Spirit of God dwelling in him, and in consequence of this, his passions and desires are brought under a different rule, and are directed to a different object. His hopes and prospects, his

opinions and feelings are all changed—his understanding is enlightened by the knowledge of the truth, and his heart is filled with love to God, and love to man. Ah ! it is a fatal error to suppose that man can be saved without, personally, participating in the Spirit of Christ, and thus becoming one with him ; or, that any creed or profession, however orthodox, makes a Christian. He, and he alone, is a Christian, who has the Holy Spirit, and who is sanctified by Him. The gates of heaven are closed against every thing impure ; and the soul which enters there, must be not merely a forgiven, but a sanctified soul. The effect of Christ's work, is to renew or change the mind of man, so as to make it holy, and fit, consistently with the holiness and justice of God, to be received into his presence. And, as surely as the soul of Adam came from the hand of God, a holy transcript of the human soul of Christ, so certainly, shall it be restored to the same degree of holiness ; and as certainly as the body of man shall, in the resurrection, be made like unto the glorious body of Christ, so surely shall the soul of man, on being released from the corruptible body, even in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, be made holy and spotless as the soul of Christ. The blessed work of sanctification, is going on, in the pilgrimage to Zion. Already, there is a change, and an active desire to do the will of God, and resemble the blessed Redeemer. But the most sanctified soul here, feels, that no attainment he has acquired, no temper he possesses, nothing he has yet done, or can hope to do, can justify him in the sight of God, and entitle him to heaven. He trusts in the imputed righteousness of Christ, and even when freed from this sinful world, and arrived at the bright and happy abode of glorified spirits, and made like them altogether holy, he lays his crown at the foot of the throne, and joins

in the humble acknowledgment of the redeemed, and in their song of praise unto the Lamb. If this be the ultimate object of redemption, what ought we to be doing here? If, when we reach our Father's house, we shall be received as his sons, and delight to do his will—if, when we behold the Lamb of atonement, we break forth in the language of grateful praise to him who has redeemed us by his blood, what ought our supreme object to be here, in this our state of preparation? Blessed Jesus, send thy Spirit unto us, to unite us with thee, and to begin in us, on earth, the life of heaven. May he instruct and enlighten us in all holy knowledge; destroy in us all sinful desires; and so change us into thy image, and conform us to thy example, that we may indeed be satisfied that we are part of thy body, and may have dear fellowship with those, who are now rejoicing with thee, in the fulness of glory!

It has been supposed by some, that God could not demand perfect obedience from an imperfect creature, and, therefore, that man might be saved by sincere obedience, such as he could give, and that, either without a Saviour altogether, or with the aid of one to make up his occasional deficiencies. Melancholy it is to think, that the Scriptures have been read to so little purpose, by those who boast of wisdom. Shocking it is to find, that some men for whom Christ suffered, should deny the necessity of his atonement, and according to the judgment of Paul, say, that Jesus died in vain, whilst others, degrade him into an assistant, in the work of redemption, to that man whom he wishes to redeem. Man can never be saved by sincere obedience, for he cannot yield it; he cannot be saved by imperfect obedience, for God will not accept it. He gave at first a law which is pure, and holy, and universal, and immutable. It is not changed, its demands are

not diminished, they cannot be diminished, merely, because man has fallen, and cannot fulfil its requisitions. It is not impaired, it is not brought down to the frail capacity of fallen man, but he, in Christ, is raised to it. Jesus hath magnified the law and made it honourable. But the truth is, that even such a degree of obedience, as man can yield, is not yielded; and, therefore, granting that the demand were lowered to the present capacity of man, the relaxation could be of no avail. Is there a mortal who can lay his hand upon his heart, and declare, that a day has passed in which he has not voluntarily yielded to a sin, which conscience tells him a more vigorous resistance might have prevented? Is there a single hour in which he might not have been more successful in the performance of a duty, and in the cultivation of the foundation of all duty—love to God?

The very entrance of sin into the world, was manifested, not by any act of violence or fraud, not by the violation of any precept or command, essential to the interest of society, or by the breach of any ordinance of morality, apparently important in its consequences. “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it.” Such, was the sole command given to Adam, a simple test of obedience, and a test well calculated to show, that sin consists not in the grosser acts of criminality, but in any want of conformity to the will of God. We know not why this test was selected, rather than a restriction from entering a particular part of the garden, or any other mark of obedience; but it was the simple, and, as some would call it, the trivial act, of eating the fruit, which destroyed the man, who, the moment before, had been holy, harmless, and undefiled; and can this one act, then, be so grievous an offence, can there be more value, in the eye of God, in one fruit than in another, and can so venial

a transgression obtain no forgiveness? To this the reply is plain and decisive: man was created a pure and a holy being, without sin, and, consequently, acceptable to God, in whose presence, nothing, which is not perfectly holy, can be allowed to stand. The test had been broken, man was no longer holy and pure, but had violated the command; and now, not merely the holiness of God, forbade the approach of an unclean or contaminated spirit, but his truth stood pledged that this transgression, venial as it appears, if its principle be overlooked, should be visited with death. Neither tears nor repentance, nor the deepest sorrow could wash out the stain. We read not indeed of either prayer or humiliation, but only of fear, and of attempts to palliate, what could not be denied; but as certainly as God is holy, so certainly must a spirit, now impure, be banished from his presence, and as truly as God declared the penalty, so surely shall it be inflicted. If ever Adam is to be restored to the favour of his Creator, it must be by some means which shall renew him, and make him again spotless, and by some interposition which shall reconcile the truth of God with his mercy. There was devised for man a scheme of mercy, not shown to angels: an atonement for sin, and a restoration to perfect holiness, and perfect righteousness, and this now brings me to the point at which I wished to arrive, a point admitted and established by all who have written on the word of God, namely, that all have sinned, and that he who has trodden down all the laws of God and man, the profligate, the vicious, the cruel, and the dishonest, is not more certainly a sinner, than he who intrenches himself behind a rampart of benevolence, and obedience to all the decrees and ordinances of religion. There is no exemption, and although one man may be worse than another, all are contaminated by the same principle of sin,

and all alike excluded from the favour and the presence of God. That, as a general condition, sin prevails, is readily admitted by all, but without drawing the proper conclusion. If the wages of sin be death, then we can see why the infant is cut off, not because he himself has sinned, but because he has partaken of a sinful nature. Some deny the existence of original sin, whilst others admit it as the only sin they possess, and one which may be easily atoned for, by the sufferings of our Saviour, without any change on their part. Now, it is this very delusion which I wish to combat, by a reference to the original transgression. Our man of indifference and security, rests confident in his freedom from great and open sins, nay, some, if questioned as to their observance of the commandments, might say, all these have I kept from my youth upwards, and still to the very best of them might be replied, yet lackest thou one thing. Jesus, at once, touched the spring of the ruler's heart, which opened up to himself, that which he lacked, and showed that the law of God was not paramount; and there cannot be a doubt that if any one, in sincerity, put the same question, and pray for an answer, he shall read very little of the Scriptures, till he find some passage which will, at once, betray to him his besetting sin. Let us take the most gentle and amiable of human beings, fair in form, and lovely, and gentle, and full of kindness and benevolence, who lives but to please, and in whom it would be difficult to find a fault; and where is the man so harsh, or the doctrine so forbidden, it may be asked, as to place this amiable and excellent being, under the wrath of God? Now, if any case can show the deadly and the dreadful evil of sin, it is this one; for, with all these endearing qualities, and an assemblage of virtues rarely to be met with, there may be lacking that one thing, that one principle, the want of which ruins

the whole. Where is the person who will say that Eve, after her first transgression, was not at least, as lovely, as gentle, as amiable, as this example, and yet on her rested the sentence of condemnation? There may, with the fairest and most engaging exhibition of human virtues, and even with a general reverence and respect for religion, be wanting that deep thankfulness for a Redeemer, and that supreme love of God, which is required; and were there no other transgression to account for, the want of due sensibility to the greatness of the gift of God, is of itself a heinous offence, chargeable upon all. For, where is the man who can say, that he has duly prized, and deeply, and thankfully, and reverentially felt, the value of that bitterness of soul, and agony even unto death, which was sustained by the glorious Redeemer. Perhaps the first reproach of the convert, and the last sorrow of the dying Christian, is, that he has so inadequately estimated, and so little honoured, the work of Christ. If it be asked, what is the degree of love to God, and gratitude for the Saviour, and devotedness to his cause, which is required. I reply, it is that which is yielded by saints in heaven, that which is yielded by those who are wholly sanctified, and less than that cannot be accepted; and where is the man who will say that he, in this sinful and imperfect state, can yield that here, or who even attempts to yield that which he can?

That our works afford any plea for justification, is a miserable mistake, adopted in opposition to the whole tenor of the gospel. By the deeds of the law no man can be justified. Some have endeavoured to get rid of this apostolic sentiment, by saying that it refers to the ceremonial part of the law. But this is a very forced explanation. Paul, who makes this declaration, is not telling the Romans, that the ordinances of the Jews could not justify them, and, there-

fore, that a different dispensation had been given. But he is persuading them that "they are all under sin; that there is none righteous, no not one; that there is none that doeth good, no not one; that there is no fear of God before their eyes." He is reasoning, "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." And he goes on to insist that by the deeds of the law, that is clearly by the plea of obeying the moral law, no man can be justified in the sight of God. To conclude his argument, he contrasts this impossibility, with the accomplishment of our salvation through Jesus Christ, "even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all, them that believe." He labours to convince the Romans, that neither Abraham nor any other man was, or can be, justified, that is, cleared from all charge of guilt, acquitted in his trial before God, by works, but by faith and the imputed righteousness of Jesus, to whose disciples God "imputeth righteousness without works." And after many, and strong, arguments, to prove that Jesus is our Saviour, through whom we are justified by faith, he shows the love of God, in Christ dying for us, while we were yet sinners. He encourages his readers, by concluding, that if, when they were sinners, they were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, they shall be saved by his life. The same apostle, elsewhere, uses very strong language, and very disrespectful language indeed, regarding the righteousness of man, calling it no better than "filthy rags." His first and great desire was, that he might be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ. Setting Scripture authority aside, for a little, on this point, we should conclude from the holiness of God, and the acknowledged imperfection of our best services. that these

could not, of themselves, be pleasing in his sight. He demands the whole heart, our supreme love, our constant service. Now, let any man select one of his good works, the best of them all, and examine it carefully, and he cannot do it half so carefully as God will do, let him, after this examination, say if the work, or the act of the mind, be perfect, if it could not have been improved, if it proceeded purely and ardently from love to God, and from a desire to glorify and please Him, unmixed with all other considerations. If these questions cannot be answered in the affirmative with regard to one duty, one act of the mind, one instance of obedience to the holy law of God, it follows that the accumulation of works, in a lifetime, cannot afford a better claim. The demand is not one perfect work, but it is the full and complete dedication of every minute, and the devotion of the whole heart to God. If it still be insisted that our works contribute something, let them be compared to the righteousness of Christ, which is supposed to make up the deficiency. Our works are not only finite, but imperfect, considered with respect to the capacity of man. His righteousness is infinite. If, then, it is to be imputed at all to us, our righteousness must bear the proportion to his, which finite does to infinite, which imperfection does to perfection—that is, none at all. If a man die the moment he is converted, it cannot be said, that he has done any good works, to assist his justification. He must therefore be saved, entirely by the imputed righteousness of Jesus. If that be sufficient to save any man without the aid of personal works, if our best works be imperfect, if God require perfection, it is evident that works cannot be a ground of justification.

In farther reply to those who urge the value of works for salvation, I shall make two remarks.

The first is, that we are justified, that is, admitted

into the number of the faithful, before we have done any good works at all. I have traced the work of conversion and regeneration, and shown it to be the operation of the Spirit, who leads us to the knowledge of the truth, enlightens our minds, enables us to believe in Jesus, and uniting us to him, renders us new creatures. We are, from the first, united to Christ, and are as certainly accepted by God, as at the moment of our entering into heaven. We are saved through faith, and, when united, our justification, to the infinite mind, is as complete and perfect as at the day of our death. We are justified, then, before we have had time to do good works to aid ourselves.

The second remark is, that regeneration and justification are simultaneous; but to man there is a difference between justification and salvation in point of time. He is justified, through faith, the moment he comes to Christ, and is renewed in his mind by the Holy Spirit, but his salvation is not then completed. It is going on, but it is not accomplished, till the very last enemy be overcome, till death itself be subdued. In one respect, indeed, salvation is synonymous with justification; for he who is justified is safe, he is delivered from the power of Satan, and translated into the kingdom of Jesus. But it is different, if it be made to include the progress of the christian life, and the various steps, by which the soul is made meet, for the inheritance of the saints. This is not accomplished at once, it goes on from conversion till death. We are, in this view, admonished to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, it is in progress; but we are never admonished to work out our justification; that we cannot do—it is done already. The steps are these, as enumerated by the apostle—we are called—we are justified—we are glorified, in Christ and by his Spirit.

By works, we mean not merely services of the body, or the performances of rites and ceremonies, as among the Jews, but also, and principally, acts of the mind, operations of the intellectual part of man, whether these be referred to the head or the heart, charity, benevolence, humility, resignation, love to God, and all the other christian graces and virtues, with obedience to all the parts of the moral law of God. Now, none of these works can, by an unregenerated soul, be offered with acceptance to God, for none of them can be performed in perfection, and from a holy motive. These can have no merit, unless performed in the utmost degree of strictness and completeness, of which the human soul is capable. Were this done in every instant of life, then man might urge that he fulfilled the covenant of works. Yet even then, whatever his merit might be, let not man think he has, himself, any intrinsic merit or goodness. No created being can have goodness of its own, for whatever it performs, is performed in consequence of powers and properties communicated to it, and devised by a superior hand. An orrery, has no merit for showing the motions of the heavenly bodies. An angel, has no intrinsic merit, for the service he performs, the result of the faculties he hath been endowed with. Adam, in his state of innocence, had no intrinsic merit for glorifying God. The merit redounds to the Creator; and if no created being has intrinsic merit, it follows that no created being could redeem man, having nothing strictly his own to offer. Jesus combined the divinity with a human soul; and, therefore, although the human soul was created, yet it was united to him who created. If a created being have no intrinsic merit, which is very obvious, it follows that the only other merit it can have is relative, consisting in fulfilling exactly, and without the smallest deviation, the purpose for which it was created. The

merit of an angel, is in this respect, the same with that of a man, although the nature of the one, may qualify for different service from the other; but neither angel nor man can have this species of merit, unless all the faculties be unremittingly and perfectly employed in the service of God. Let any son of Adam say that he possesses this merit, and then I shall admit that he has no need of a Saviour, and that by works he can be saved. But if any deviation from this merit, in the desires of the heart, in the thoughts of the mind, in the whole tenor of life be found, then the merit is lost, the covenant is broken, the ground of acceptance is destroyed. Man must be restored, he must be redeemed, and he can only be redeemed by a Being who has intrinsic merit, and his redemption must be accomplished independently of all merit of his own. His performance of the duties for which he was created, with a single exception, could not prevent the necessity of the effects of that single exception being removed. Sin is disobedience to God, a misapplication of the faculties with which man is created to glorify God. The least deviation is sin, and in the sight of God every want of conformity, a single want of conformity, must pollute the soul, and nothing which a polluted soul can do, can be acceptable. Its perfection is lost, its power of pleasing gone, and until it be created anew, until it be cleansed from pollution, it cannot be beheld with complacency by a holy God.

The merit of every created being, consists in the strict, and perfect performance of his appointed duty. No creature is possessed of goodness as an inherent property. God is the only Being who is in himself good. He is goodness and perfection. The angels were created good and pure; but they were not goodness and purity, else they had been gods, and none of them had swerved from their duty. The

fall of angels, proves that no creature has in itself the principle of holiness and goodness, and the fall of man establishes the same. No being left to himself, however pure and holy his mind may be, is secure from falling, either by the operation of his own desires, or by the temptation of others. Ages may have rolled on before an angel fell, but the possibility of his fall, was as certain when the first angel was created, as when Satan sinned; and if a saint were received into heaven, merely, as a pure spirit, there is no certainty how long he might remain there. But, through Jesus, the Spirit is given, by whom there is a certainty of preservation, as he dwells in them and makes them holy, being himself the principle of holiness and of all perfection. Saints, then, are only accepted on account of the imputed righteousness and sufferings of Christ, and are made saints, or holy creatures, only, by the Spirit of God dwelling in them; and, by this Spirit, they are as safe on earth, as they shall be in heaven. The plea of acceptance on account of obedience, then, may be brought to a short issue. Neither man nor angel, has in his own nature the principle of holiness, which is a property of Deity. Man, can only claim the favour of God, by the performance of those duties, intended to be performed by creatures of his species; and if he, or any, or all of his race, fail in any one respect or degree in the performance, he, or they, must have lost the perfection of their nature, and cannot be accepted.

Some, who have thought lightly on the subject, place their hope of acceptance, entirely in the mercy of God, which should induce Him to forgive sin, without any adequate atonement. There can be no doctrine more dangerous, nor any more unfounded, either in reason or in Scripture. He, who trusts, supinely, to the mercy of God, without repentance,

and the interposition of a Saviour, leans indeed on a broken reed. The mercy of God is infinite, his love surpasseth our understanding, but his mercy cannot be exercised in opposition to his justice. The sentence is decisive—"the soul that sinneth shall die." How, then, is this death to be avoided? Not, surely, by God exercising a simple act of forgiveness. God never does forgive sin, though he may, for the sake of Jesus, forgive the repentant sinner. Paul, who knew well the mercy of God, who knew it much better than those who, ignorantly, trust to it alone, declares "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of man." "As many as have sinned without law, shall perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law." Jeremiah, prophesied of a time, of which, God said, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." But this promise of mercy, is not made in opposition to the attribute of infinite justice, for, in the epistle to the Hebrews, it is expressly introduced as founded on the atonement of Jesus. Were forgiveness obtained, merely through the compassion of God, there had been no need of the Jewish ordinances; or, if their sacrifices were appointed as testimonies of humility and means of supplication, there had been no cause for abolishing them. "If perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, what further need was there, that another priest should rise, after the order of Melchisedek?" The patriarchs, and holy men of old, were only accepted through Christ, for they, "without us," that is, without the christian dispensation, could "not be made perfect." Surely, if sin might be forgiven without any punishment, actual or imputed, one priest might be expected to be as acceptable as another. If Jesus came, merely as a teacher and instructor of men, and to give

them an example of piety and obedience, as some heretics believe, his doctrines, and his belief of their truth, might have been confirmed by some other mean than his death.

Having insisted on the doctrine of justification, through faith, and by the imputed righteousness of Christ, I must next consider the fruit of this faith. I have explicitly maintained the apostolic opinion, that we are saved through faith without works ; but, I am also to maintain another apostolic sentiment, that though works cannot justify and save us, yet, faith without works is dead. Faith, is not a speculative assent to the truth of a proposition ; it is not an inactive principle. The Christian is to devote his powers and faculties, to the service of God. He is to love God, with all his heart and soul ; and, in every part, he is, from love, to fulfil the moral law. There is a positive injunction, "If you love me," said Jesus, "keep my commandments ;" and the same authority declares, "by their fruits ye shall know them." No Christian grounds his hopes of acceptance on his obedience or his works ; but he knows, that these are appointed means, for obtaining his daily prayer, "Lord, increase our faith," and for advancing his perfection. Jesus came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it ; he came not to absolve his disciples from its observance, but, by dwelling in them, to enable them to observe it. He came to create them, anew, unto good works. These are properties inherent in the gift of salvation, but are not causes or conditions of it. There are properties or qualities, belonging to matter and mind, but these, though absolutely necessary to their character, do not constitute them. The obligation to love and serve God, is binding in every state, and the gospel does not relieve man from it ; on the contrary, it declares, that without holiness, no one shall see the Lord. This

holiness, pervading the life, and reaching the heart, is the consequence of faith, the gift of God, "who worketh in us both to will and to do." Good works are the fruits of the Spirit. Jesus hath himself explained the subject, and shown that they proceed solely from him. A very short time before his death, he delivered a solemn discourse to his disciples, in which he illustrates their connexion with him, by that which subsists between a vine and its branches. "I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing." "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

Bearing fruit, is not the condition on which a tree lives, it is not the cause of its life; it is the effect, it is an evidence of vitality and vigour. Love to God, charity to all mankind, obedience to the commandments of Jesus, are the fruits of the Christian's union with Christ; and it is vain for any man to say that this union has taken place, if he be "barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." The apostle John, who, in his epistle, insists much on the important subjects, of the love of God, and the obligations of Christians to love Him, and one another, solemnly declares, "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." In contemplating the glorious change, which shall take place at the resurrection, when we shall see Christ as he is, he, as a practical admonition, adds, "and every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Paul, after enumerating the works of the flesh, and the fruits of the Spirit, concludes, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." He, in the same epistle, establishes,

to the Galatians, the grand doctrine of justification through faith, "the hope of righteousness by faith," but he shows that those only, who walk in the Spirit, can be said to have this living faith. As if there could be a doubt on the subject, he adds a solemn caution, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

It is by the fruit of the Spirit, that we know the presence of the Spirit; it is by fruit, that we have evidence of faith; it is by fruit, that we know that any man is a branch in the vine. He cannot bear good fruit, unless he abide in the vine; and, however he may deceive himself, he is not in the vine, unless he bring forth fruit. Jesus himself sayeth, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me, that beareth not fruit, he taketh away, and every branch, that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me." We see, then, the necessity of works, and farther, that these works, to be holy, must proceed from Christ working in us. Indeed, both reason and gospel teach us, that faith is useless without works, for it is then a mere opinion, which may be entertained by bad men, as well as by good. Nay, the devils themselves believe and tremble. The apostle James argues this point at large. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith, and I have works. Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Was

not Abraham, our father, justified by works, when he had offered Isaac, his son, upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect. As the body, without the spirit, is dead, so is faith without works." The whole of this reasoning is conclusive, and affords an unerring test, of the existence of christian faith. Both Paul and James, illustrate the doctrine of faith, by the example of Abraham. The first, when reasoning on righteousness imputed through faith, declares, that Abraham was justified by faith.—He believed God, "and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." He is brought forward, as an example, of justification through faith, and not by works. The second, is not at variance with the first; for, although Paul says that Abraham had nothing to glory of before God, and James says that he was justified by works, yet, James only means to prove, that his faith was evidenced by his works, not that his works were the ground of his acceptance, for he immediately adopts, the very Scripture used by Paul, "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness."

Paul, after labouring to prove the necessity of faith, and after establishing the doctrine, that we are saved by the atonement, and imputed righteousness of Jesus, seems to have been aware, that some might wrest this, as other parts of the Scripture, to their own destruction, and infer from it, that, as they were to be saved by grace, they might with impunity commit sin, and yet hope for salvation, through the infinite merits of Jesus. He therefore puts the questions, "What shall we say, then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" And again, "shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?" To both, he gives the same answer, exclaiming with abhorrence, "God forbid." It appears,

then, that either the heresy, that faith superseded works, had very early prevailed, or, the apostle had anticipated it, and provided an answer. It is much to be feared, that some good men, who would disclaim the heresy with abhorrence, do nevertheless, sometimes, from the deceitfulness of the heart, and the influence of Satan, act practically upon it. They may yield, with fewer struggles, to a temptation from an evil thought, that they are saved through faith, and that if they sin, they have an advocate with the Father. That Christians should ever do so, is deeply to be regretted, and is no proof of the truth of the opinion. It is not true, that every thing, a good man does, is good. This evil, is one which is last subdued, if ever overcome in this life; for nothing is so dangerous, so easily given way to, as that which appears to have some security from a good principle, though it be, in truth, a perversion of that principle. That Jesus is an advocate for his people, and that they are saved, not by their own works, but by his merit, are truths; but, he who wilfully sins, because these are truths, has no claim to the character of a Christian, and no hope of salvation. If the Christian should unwarily yield to sin, and if his resistance be less vigorous than it might have been, from a suggestion that he may be forgiven through Christ, he has much ground for repentance and bitter sorrow; and one thing he may be convinced of, that the more readily he yields to sin, the less evidence has he of his faith. The devil employs many wiles to ruin the soul, and this suggestion that the sin may be forgiven, is one of the most frequent. For, he who believed that the particular act of sin, could not, and would not, be forgiven, certainly would make greater resistance, than he who, in the moment of strong temptation, has the suggestion, that forgiveness may still be obtained. Indeed, the depravity of

the human heart is naturally so great, the deceitfulness of sin so remarkable, and the artifices and allurements of the devil so various, that, except by the grace of God strengthening him, no man could stand. Let the Christian watch and pray, lest he enter into temptation; let him shun, not merely sin, but the avenues which lead to it; and never let him so degrade the doctrine of the gospel, as to sin, that grace may abound. There is, indeed, perhaps, no man who commits sin, and does not feel, that he has, at the instant, consented to it, and who is not conscious, that he might have made a more vigorous resistance. The hope of forgiveness may, even without his perceiving it, amidst the tumult of the passions, or the strength of the temptation, have had a share in his defeat. But if it had, it was an antichristian principle, and the influence was involuntary, if he really possessed faith. It was never with him a deliberate argument. He who can make it a motive to sin, has no more pretension to the character of a Christian, than to the nature of an angel.

It will be said that the doctrine of grace, is favourable to immorality. I deny the charge. Every mortal from the unsubdued principle of evil within him, does sin, but he who feels the power of grace, sins less in proportion as he feels it. He is not relieved, from the obligation to keep the moral law, but, on the contrary, he has additional calls, and his faith worketh by love. No man can believe the doctrine of the atonement, and feel its power, without having the deepest sentiments of love and gratitude; and no man can possess these sentiments without having an earnest desire to "serve God, acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." Can he, who has been convinced of the dreadful evil of sin, who has felt its danger to himself, who has contemplated the greatness of the sacrifice demanded for his salvation,

ever be supposed, to indulge in the practice of sin, or to view it with indifference? The supposition is absurd, for it implies the agreement of things which are, in their nature, contrary to each other. The Christian, is mindful of the admonition of Peter, "As he who hath called you is holy, so, be ye holy, in all manner of conversation." This he obeys, not as a stern order, which he is afraid to transgress, but as a law, which it is his delight to practise. The character of a Christian, is summed up in that given of Barnabas, "He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." If this character be consistent with immorality, then, we possess not the knowledge of good and evil—we can no longer trust the principles of reason or common sense.

The work of Christ, must, on no account, be broken or disjoined. The mere atonement, and vicarious obedience, could, at the most, only purchase exemption from punishment, but could not make the soul fit for heaven. There must, then, for that purpose, be a change, a communicated quality, of a personal description. There must be holiness of heart.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE NATURE OF THE FUTURE STATE OF HAPPINESS.

HAVING set out with the principle, that this life is only to be considered as a prelude to another, for which man is ultimately intended, and having inquired how this is obtained, I proceed to consider the nature of his future abode. In this consideration, we cannot go beyond general information. Our knowledge is obtained, entirely from the Scriptures, containing the revealed word of God; and in these, we find only such communications, as are consistent with our present good, and can be comprehended by our imperfect faculties. They are, however, sufficient to animate our hopes, and impart a joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

In common language, the place where the redeemed shall dwell, is called heaven, and this appellation is given only to that place. But when we speak of heaven, in a more extended sense, we mean any place out of this world, where the glory of God is peculiarly manifested. In this sense, there may be many heavens, each differing from the other, and, perhaps, containing different orders of beings. In thinking of the heavens, we naturally look up, and refer to a region above the earth. Stephen is said to have looked up stedfastly into heaven, and to have seen the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. "Behold," said he, being full of the Holy Ghost, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

Now, this merely implies that the heavens are exterior to the earth, for the terms above and below are relative, and had he been on the opposite side of the globe, still he would have looked up into heaven. If we speak of heaven, as the place where we shall dwell, after the resurrection, we must consider it as only one department of the unseen world. Every created being, angels and men, must be in some particular place. We cannot, even with regard to the disembodied soul, disconnect it from the idea of a local habitation. It cannot be every-where, for that is an attribute peculiar to the Deity ; and with regard to the glorified body, it can only occupy a space equal to its size. With respect to the place, appointed for the reception of the faithful, after the resurrection, we are informed by Jesus, that in his Father's house are many mansions, that is, in the heavens are many habitations, and he adds, I go to prepare a place for you. How he hath prepared, and procured, this place, has been already considered. It is made over, to his people, as a sure inheritance. It is described, as " an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven, for you who are kept, by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." It is said to be reserved in heaven, which may imply that it is already created and kept in readiness ; or, as the present and the future are equally present to God, it may not be created until this earth, whose place it is to supply, be destroyed, the expression being used in the same way, as Christ is said, to have been slain from the foundation of the world. The patriarchs and prophets looked forward to this, and spake of it as a city, and sometimes as a new earth, which was to come in place of this condemned world. Abraham, is said by Paul, in his epistle to his descendents, to have dwelt in tents, as

in a strange country ; “ for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” And the same apostle, elsewhere, pursuing the idea, says, that Christians desire a better country, that is an heavenly, and that God “ hath prepared for them a city.” Isaiah, prophesies of this, saying, “ Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered ;” and he afterwards says, “ as the new heaven and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, sayeth the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain.” Peter, foretelling the conflagration of the world, adds, “ nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” John had a prophetic vision of this. “ I saw,” says he, “ a new heaven and a new earth, for, the first heaven and the first earth, had passed away, and there was no more sea ;” and he describes the city of New Jerusalem, as descending out of heaven. This vision, together with the expression of Paul, that the inheritance is reserved in heaven, makes it probable, that the abode of just men made perfect, does already exist, and is prepared and created by Christ.

Perhaps, when the work of redemption was finished, on earth, when Jesus had triumphed over the destroyer, when he ascended on high, and a cloud received him from the sight of the men of Galilee, the first act of the exalted Redeemer, was to call into existence this new earth, fitted to receive those chosen ones whose ransom he had paid. We may well suppose, that on the return of the Son, to the glory of the Father, the heavenly hosts would proclaim his praise, with songs and adorations, which no man can utter, and which the inhabitants of heaven alone could offer. They had beheld on earth a sight disregarded by men, even the Son of God

himself, manifest in the flesh, humbled, afflicted, crucified for the sins of the children of Adam. They behold him still God and man, still in the likeness of man, but glorious, and exalted, "far above all principalities and powers, and every name that can be named in heaven or in earth." They sing his welcome, they adore his greatness and his goodness. Loud hosannahs fill the heavens, and, to unfold, still more, those things which angels desire to look into, lo! new glories burst suddenly on their view, new heavens and a new earth appear at once before them, glorious and resplendent, with the brightness of the Lord. If, when the first world was created, and light sprang out of darkness, the hosts of heaven sang praise to God, how much more joyfully, do they hail, the creation of that everlasting habitation, prepared for the ransomed of the Lord! and how gladly do they look forward, to the accomplishment of all things, when there shall be no more curse, but holiness shall fill the place for ever! Shall angels sing praise to God, for the wonders of his love, and we remain silent, we, who have been redeemed by the death of his Son, we, for whom this glorious habitation is prepared? Shall we, the objects of his love, we, to whom such glorious hopes are given, refrain from joining, though in feeble strains, the angelic song of praise? If angels desire to look into the mystery of redemption, and anticipate the consummation of all things, shall they who hope for redemption, confine their hopes, their desires, their thoughts, and their cares, to this world which perisheth? Shall they not, rather, desire to have their conversation in heaven, and constantly to rejoice in the hope of that glory, which is to follow? Jesus is the object of their love, him they desire to behold, into his kingdom they long to enter. With the angels of God, and the spirits of just men made

perfect, ought they not to cry, though not with the same "loud voice," "Salvation to our God who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb. Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

This new earth, must only occupy a certain part of space ; it must have precise limits and established bounds. John describes, circumstantially, the shape and dimensions of the New Jerusalem, and the glory of its fabric. The language is evidently figurative, but it must have been dictated, by the Holy Spirit, for some good purpose, and must be intended to convey some idea of the place. Its bounds are fixed ; the glory thereof is most exquisite ; and the light "like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." "It has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God does lighten it ; and the Lamb is the light thereof ; and there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it." The present earth is cursed for the sake of man. Clouds and tempests pass over it, and its inhabitants are full of violence and deceit. The new earth is represented under the most glorious characters, and the New Jerusalem is three different times, described by John as being "clear even as crystal," "like unto clear glass," "as it were transparent glass." We can only judge of the unknown by what we do know, and the glory of the world to come, requires to be described, by images which we are acquainted with, however they may fall short, of what they are intended to represent.

With regard to the nature of the glorified body, and its enjoyments, we have received such intimations from the word of God, as make us acquainted with the general condition.

At a time, when there shall be great degeneracy

among men, when they shall scoffingly say, where is the promise of his coming? the trumpet shall suddenly sound, "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." The coming of the Lord shall be sudden and unexpected; no warning, no portentous sign shall be given; whilst, in one hemisphere, men are wrapped up in the silence of the night, and, in the other, the sun beholds them busy in the cares and pleasures of life, the desolation cometh as a whirlwind. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, which is less than a moment, the trumpet shall sound. They who are alive, shall be instantaneously changed; it is expressly revealed that they shall not die, but they shall be changed in a moment. Then the dead shall be raised, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Time is now no more, and the affairs of time, are only remembered, for the purpose of judgment. All things, have, with the rapidity of lightning, passed away. The accomplishment of all things is at hand, and, the salvation of the redeemed, is, this day, to be completed. Our bodies, shall be raised, like to that of Christ, and the soul, shall instantly reunite with the glorified body. As we, the descendents of Adam, have borne the image of our earthly parent, so shall we then bear the image of the heavenly Adam. Our vile bodies shall be fashioned like his glorious body. The nature of the change we cannot tell, but it must be great. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The corruptible body must put on incorruption; it must be converted into a body which is incapable of decay. It is described as being glorious, by which we understand resplendent. On the mount, Jesus, when transfigured, appeared in this glory, "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." This is not figurative lan-

guage, but a faithful description of what was seen. Our knowledge of the future condition, is assisted by this, but it is not completed. Our imagination can conceive a body, light and pure, and free from decay, but we cannot conceive the nature and properties of that body. We know not how it moves. What senses remain, and what new ones are added, we cannot determine. We may presume that those we possess here, for the preservation and defence of this body, shall not there be required, whilst those which are the sources of intellectual information, particularly sight and hearing, will be continued. Many new ones may be added, but of a new sense, we, in our present state, cannot form an idea. That the body shall enjoy heavenly pleasures as well as the soul, appears probable from the resurrection of the body; for, were the body neither to be rewarded in heaven, nor punished in hell, it would be difficult to assign any reason for that reunion between soul and body, which we know shall take place at the last day. But of the nature of this enjoyment, we are as ignorant as we are of the heavenly body itself. The powers of the mind shall be increased beyond all our conception, and the knowledge shall keep pace with the power. What ideas may be considered as innate, in the sanctified soul, that is what knowledge it may intuitively possess from the Deity, and what it may acquire, cannot here be determined. But some faint idea of our knowledge, may be obtained, when we consider, that our faculties shall be inconceivably strengthened and increased, and that, during the endless ages of eternity, we shall be continually improving; yet, so infinite is the perfection of God, that at the end of myriads of ages, our knowledge shall bear no proportion to his, no, not so much as a drop of water does to the ocean. The love of God, which passeth all human understanding, shall then be more

forcibly, and more clearly, perceived; the evil of sin be more manifest, its bitter consequences be better understood, and the whole soul be wrapt up in the contemplation of the goodness of God, in the gift of salvation. Lively gratitude, ecstatic and inconceivable joy, will animate the heart, and produce the perpetual, and rapturous, song of praise, which is sung unto the Lamb. Some faint conception may be formed of this holy joy, of this delightful feeling of love, from those moments on earth, when Christians, in the contemplation of redemption, seem caught up into heaven, and enjoy a portion of holy fire, which makes their hearts burn within them, and enables them to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The beloved disciple, who had a revelation of those things which were to come, saw, when he was in the Spirit, four living creatures round the throne of God, who ceased not, day nor night, to cry out, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come; and, whilst these beings ascribe holiness to God, and praise his holy name, the four-and-twenty elders, the representatives of the redeemed, fall down, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever; and many angels, and the living creatures, and the elders, the whole host of heaven, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, cry with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb who was slain. The love, the gratitude, the fervent thankfulness of the saints to Him who hath redeemed them, can never be conceived on earth. They sing a song, which no man can learn, till he be "redeemed from the earth." John, who heard it, could not learn it. Paul, who was caught up into the third heaven, heard those things, which it was not possible for a man to utter. Neither of these apostles, when they returned to the earthly state, could repeat the heavenly song, or retain or describe the praises of the spirits of the just,

more than a man in a deep sleep, can, voluntarily, perform all the actions of men, and join in their varied reasonings and pursuits, or than an infant can pursue the complicated labours of philosophy.

Whilst the soul riseth in ardent affection, to Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, it still adores its God and Creator; for this glorious Redeemer, who is the object of the heavenly praises, is alpha and omega, the beginning and the ending, the Lord who is, and who was, and who is to come—the Almighty. Had God redeemed us, by any created being, that being should have shared the love we owe to God, we should have approached that benefactor with gratitude and affection, with an homage and regard due only to God. But our Redeemer is the mighty God, the Prince of Peace; we adore, in Him, our Creator, as well as our Saviour; and the more highly we ascribe praise to the Lamb, the more do we glorify the Holy Trinity. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father; and he who ascribes divine honour and praise unto the Son, does the same unto the Father, and unto the Holy Ghost.

The contemplation of the redeeming love of God, shall excite affections continually increasing. In this life, we find that our desires and passions, by indulgence and encouragement, grow with our growth, and acquire vigour by their continuance. In reflecting on the friends who have left us, and the joy we have lost, our feelings increase, until at last they overpower us. But in heaven, we have neither sorrow nor grief, and no feelings which we can wish to repress, no emotion which can overpower the mind. The strength of the affection is uniformly increasing, but the strength of the mind is also increasing; the augmentation of love never ends; the delight is continually advancing. Does the soul, here, absorbed in

gratitude, when contemplating the rich mercy of God, exclaim, What shall I render unto thee, O Lord, for all thy goodness? wherewithal shall I celebrate the praise of thy redeeming love? Does it break forth into thanksgiving and songs of praise? Bless the Lord, O my soul! and all that is within me bless his holy name. Does it feel that language is incapable of expressing the sentiments of the heart, even in this state of weakness and imperfection, and that tears of joy, of gratitude, of love, give relief to the strong workings of the mind? Does the Christian feel, that feeble as his praise is, cold as his devotions are, compared to what they shall hereafter be, they are a source of greater happiness, than all the pleasures of sense, and that with David he would say, "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; a day in thy courts, is better than a thousand?" If such be the feelings on earth, how exalted must the happiness of heaven be, where this joy, which here overpowers the soul, those desires towards God, which here cannot find an utterance, shall not only exist in high perfection, but shall, through eternity, be continually increasing, whilst, at the same time, the capacity of the mind shall be in the same proportion improving? Alas! how little do even good men think of this boundless joy? Is it because the mind can, by no effort, attain to any conception of this blessedness, more than feeble man can shake the mountains from their foundations, and therefore it makes no attempt? or, is it not rather that the objects of sense have taken so firm hold on the affections, that the mind can seldom hold conversation in heaven? In our happiest moments, in those when we have most intimate communion with God, we can rise to a certain height, but these moments are short, our weak minds have not capacity to render them durable, and the Spirit of God does

not always enlighten them with the same brightness, nor strengthen them with the same vigour. When Peter beheld the glory of Christ, on the mount, he said, Lord, it is good for us to be here, but while he yet spake, the bright cloud, which finished the transfiguration, overshadowed him.

In heaven, sin shall be completely destroyed, and the soul shall be made holy. Supreme love to God, shall fill the heart, which here is too much devoted to self and to the world; perfect obedience shall then be yielded by the soul, which here, in many things, sins, and, in all, comes short of the glory of God. To do the will of God, shall then be the meat and the drink of the human soul, as it was of Christ on earth. To serve him, shall be the delight and the joy, of the redeemed spirit. Here, we are afflicted by our sins; there, we shall be completely sanctified, and possess all the communicable perfections of the Deity. There are some attributes, which God alone can possess, such as almighty power, omniscience, omnipresence. These stand opposed to limited power, limited knowledge, limited presence, which alone can be possessed by a created being. The moral attributes of the Deity, holiness, justice, mercy, goodness, love, faithfulness, &c., are also infinite, and can only be possessed in a limited degree by a creature; but, in this degree, they are possessed by the soul, and the degree is as great as the capacity of the soul can receive; it is filled with the divine perfections, which entirely pervade it, making it full of holiness and full of happiness. The measure of holiness and happiness, the soul can possess, depends on the capacity granted to it by the Creator. Now, the capacity is always increasing, and always satisfied. But the moral perfection or holiness of a creature, as well as its happiness, must also differ from the perfection and happiness of God,

inasmuch, as the perfections of God are intrinsic, whilst those of a creature, are communicated to it, for the glory and service of God, and also, inasmuch, as the perfections of a creature are finite, whilst those of the Deity are infinite. The holiness of the redeemed soul, bears no more proportion to that of God, than the limited presence of the saint, in a part of space, does to the omnipresence of God. God, is not only holy, and pure, and good, but is, himself, the principle of holiness, purity, and every perfection. The soul, in heaven, is pure and holy, but has not, in itself, the imperishable principle of holiness, which is infinite and belongs to God. Not having this, the soul in heaven, might again sin, as the angels did, however holy and pure, it might, for incalculable ages, continue to be. But the Spirit of God, in whom resides this principle, pervades the soul and dwells in it; therefore, it is safe for ever, being kept by the power of God, and can no more sin or fall, than a being can die, which has, inseparably connected with it, the principle of life. The soul is thus not only holy, and happy, and safe, but, by the progressive and increasing operation of the Spirit of God, is continually advancing in improvement and happiness. The soul is perpetually increasing in knowledge and happiness, and yet, through eternity, never can approach to the infinite perfection. How does this exalt our ideas of God!

How great, then, must be the happiness of heaven, where the soul is completely purified from sin, and made altogether holy, where the capacity of knowing the love and perfections of God is increased, and knowledge is imparted in the same proportion; where the capacity of receiving the communicated holiness and happiness is increased, and these communications keep pace with the capacity, the soul being always full of the Holy Spirit, yet, progressively, enabled

to receive more. The inclination, shall be directed, with increasing ardour, to the supreme love of God, and to his constant service, whilst the power shall always correspond with the inclination. As every being is created to promote the glory of God, and finds its happiness in the performance of the service for which it is destined, so, the soul knows its duty, performs the duty, and rejoices in the duty.

The happiness of the redeemed souls, is different from that of angels. It is enhanced by the remembrance of past sorrows, and a comparison of the present purity with former imperfection. It is increased, beyond all conception, by the constant contemplation, and the more perfect understanding, of the glorious work of redemption, a theme, which day and night, calls forth their praise, and fills them with rapture at their deliverance. There is now complete freedom from sin, it prevails no more than if it had never existed, neither is there any fear of its ever entering again, nor of the inheritance being ever destroyed. Their happiness is eternal, like Him who bestows it. It is complete, and must be everlasting, for they are "filled with all the fulness of God." Can there be any thing more desired? Can the mind of man, or of angel, conceive any greater happiness, than to have the soul filled with the presence of God? It is filled, there is nothing left, there is no sin within, no enmity now to God, no depravity of heart, all is love, all is peace, every desire is toward God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In Christ, they are "builded together for an habitation of God, through the Spirit;" and God dwelling in them, they must be for ever holy, and for ever happy, even as he is always so. "These are they, who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white, in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, are they before the

throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne, shall dwell among them; they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For, the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

In heaven, the soul shall not only be employed, in praising the mercy and the love of God, but, also, in contemplating and adoring all the other attributes, and perfections, of the Godhead. The wisdom and the power of God, displayed in the creation and preservation of all things, the extensive views of his goodness and greatness, which are opened up to the mind, from sources, which although we cannot now describe or foresee them, are nevertheless innumerable, must prove a constant fund of delight. The pure and sanctified mind, having the Spirit of God within it, can comprehend more fully, and enjoy more perfectly, those things, which redound to the glory of Him who dwells in the soul. It sees no more darkly as in a glass, but, in one respect, knows, even, as it is known, the Spirit of God pervading the mind. Who can conceive the blessedness of those who behold God as he is, and are able to love Him with perfect love? Happy time, when the once sinful soul shall be so sanctified, as to receive the most exquisite delight in the contemplation of the holiness of God. Happy friends, who are now rejoicing in the glory and excellence of your God. Would that we on earth were more employed in the life of heaven, and preparing for the full joy of the redeemed!

The recollection, also, of all the ways of Providence on earth, and a retrospect of the whole chain of occurrences, in the temporal existence of man,

which shall be vividly present to the mind, must constitute an ample source of praise and glory to God. Did we, here, know the minute history of a single day, the value and consequences of even a transient thought, the relation that events, apparently trifling and fortuitous, bear to our own welfare, and the condition of others, the never ceasing regulation of Providence, and, above all, the constant operation of the Holy Spirit, in conducting our salvation, we should be lost in wonder, or transported in praise. What, then, must be the gratitude, the love, the adoration, when, in heaven, the volume of providence and grace is laid fully open, and we are enabled, at once, and by a single act of the mind, to form an estimate, of our past danger, our innumerable mercies, the wonders of our salvation?

Another, and to us on earth, a most consolatory hope of heavenly joy, arises, from the meeting of former friends, in a state of everlasting felicity. We are fitted for social purposes, and, although, in heaven, the continual employment of our faculties, be in the service of God, and the mind be filled with supreme love to him, yet, this is not incompatible with social intercourse, and the kindly feelings of friendship. Even on earth, in the moment of most exalted happiness, in the mutual encouragement of two friends, to love and praise their Redeemer, it is, experimentally, felt, that the mind can rise to God, and, yet, in this lofty flight, keep intertwined, in a mysterious way, with its companion. It is then felt, that the two principles, of love to God, and love to one another, far from enfeebling, strengthen and assist each other. How much more in heaven, shall this union of kindred souls, promote their mutual felicity, in joining, with one accord, in the same service of love and praise?

The joyful hope, of the reunion of friends, now separated by death, is conformable to the principles

of reason, implanted in us by God, and is supported clearly by his revealed word. It was the comfort and the consolation of the good, in ancient times, and continues to be the support and encouragement of Christians, to the present day. David, when mourning the loss of a beloved child, said, with the feeling of a parent, I shall go to him, but he cannot come to me; and Paul, edifying the church, with the hopes of the resurrection of the dead, recommends it to the living, that they should not sorrow, as those who had no hope, and concludes his account of the resurrection, with this practical advice, "Comfort one another with these sayings." If we had no knowledge of individual spirits, in a future state, no recollection of former days, no renewal of former friendships, then, surely, the apostle, had not given us this knowledge, as a ground of comfort. He was not then speaking of the abstract questions, of a general resurrection from the dead, and a future state of happiness, but he was bringing forward these doctrines, as a source of consolation to surviving friends. Every part of Scripture, which relates to our condition hereafter, confirms the blessed hope. Moses and Elias on the mount, during the transfiguration, were associated in the conversation with Jesus, respecting his decease. They came together, they acted together, and they returned together to their heavenly mansion. Even Dives, in a place of torment, is represented as recognising Abraham in heaven. Indeed, the opinion that hereafter we shall not know each other, is so repugnant to the feelings of the heart, so contrary to many parts of Scripture, that I shall leave the cold and melancholy doctrine, persuaded that none can be found who embrace it.

I shall not speak of the formation of new friendships in heaven, though, doubtless, the friendless and forlorn on earth, meet with many friends above,

both among the spirits of the just, and among angels. I shall advert, alone, to the reunion of friends who have been separated, and the re-establishment of former intercourse. If we only recollect, how much all the powers of the mind are to be increased, and those of social love and friendship, among the rest, we may form some faint conception, of this part of the happiness of heaven. There is not on earth, a greater temporal felicity, than that, resulting from the union of kindred souls, and the feelings produced by love and friendship. Let those who have experienced the affection of a parent to a child, or a child to a parent, but, more especially, let those who have felt that dear and sacred regard, subsisting between husband and wife, say, if earth can produce more pure, more exquisite, more exalted happiness, arising from our relations, as social beings. But the joys experienced on earth, shall be as nothing to those which exist in heaven. Parent and child, husband and wife, brethren and friends, shall then meet, in rapture, to part no more, whilst every succeeding period, shall increase their social bliss. The peculiar relations, in which they stood to each other here, are indeed dissolved. Children are not under the authority of parents, the wife is no longer subject to the husband, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven. Yet, the recollection of former ties, gives strength to the affections; and the souls of those, who have for a time been parted, join, in an intercourse, more intimate and fervent, than mortals can conceive. Does a husband, here, after a short absence, clasp the beloved partner of his life to his heart; he feels that no embrace, no words, not thought itself, can express his affection, but there, the souls are as one, the affection is beyond measure increased, whilst the power of expression is equal to the power of feeling,

and, to add to the felicity, the blessing is for ever. Well might Paul say, Comfort one another with these sayings. They are indeed a comfort in this vale of tears, an exalted, and glorious, and blessed consolation. He, alone, who hath been bereaved, by the angel of death, of friends whom he loved as his own soul, can form any conception of the nature of this comfort. Distant indeed is the idea which any one can form, of the exquisite and exalted joy, with which divided friends shall meet in heaven. The most transporting joy on earth, is to that, less than the shadow is to the substance. Whilst they love each other, with the affection of angels, they devote themselves to the glory of God. They are still, as they were on earth, servants of God, and companions with each other. They preserve their relation to God as his creatures, and to one another as fellow-creatures. They are still to glorify God, and promote the happiness of each other, and in doing the last, they fail not to perform the first. Supreme love to God fills the heart, and from this, as a pure and animating source, proceeds the performance of every service and every duty. Dear, dear friends who have left me, when we meet again, there shall be no more bitterness of death, no sad separation, but in the city of our God we shall dwell for ever, rejoicing continually in the glory of Jesus, and in the full blessedness of sanctification.

Till the accomplishment of all things, when the new earth shall take the place, of that which now is, the bodies of the saints shall rest among kindred dust, but their souls return to God who gave them. Of a disembodied spirit we can form no conception, otherwise than by comparing it, in our imagination, to a vapour, or bright ærial shade; we clothe it, for the assistance of our mind, with an airy substance. Reflection, however, shows that this is incorrect; for

the soul is immaterial, and must be invisible to mortal eyes. How pure spirits hold intercourse with each other, and distinguish each other, are questions far beyond the power of philosophy to answer, and which can only be solved to those who have entered into the invisible world. We know that, until the resurrection, the souls of the redeemed are in safe keeping, in a happy place, called, by our Lord, Paradise. We know, also, that their felicity, though great, is inferior to that which they shall enjoy, after their reunion with the body. Beyond these general propositions, our knowledge does not extend. So ignorant are we of this state, and so incapable are we of understanding it, or forming any conception of it, that even when our dearest friend is taken hence, the utmost flight of imagination cannot follow the departed soul. When the partner of our life, is separated from us here, for a season, the heart goes with her, and from our general knowledge of this temporal condition, we can form, though far distant, a mental picture of her pursuits, her pleasures, and her cares. It is the solace of our lonely hours, to call up her image, and enjoy the scene around her. But, when the messenger of death, hath called the soul, to the spiritual abode of the blessed, we may indeed gaze up into heaven, but there is a gulf, beyond which we cannot pass. The highest flight of the imagination, cannot form any conception, correct or erroneous, true or fanciful, of the state and appearance of the departed spirit.

The abode of the redeemed spirits, is called Hades,* in Scripture, or Paradise, and, perhaps, the apostle Paul speaks of this place, when he says he was caught up into the third heaven. Wherever it is, we

* This, in what is called "the creed," is rendered "hell." It is said of our Lord, "He descended into hell," an assertion most impious, if we take the word "hell," in its ordinary acceptation, in the present day.

know, that immediately after death, the soul passes into it. There is no intermediate state, no sleep, no period of insensibility. The moment the angel of death has performed his commission, we close our eyes here, and open them there. The transition is instantaneous. Some, drop down, from perfect health, into sudden death. Some, are carried off, by more lingering sickness, which, though it waste the body, leaves the mind vigorous till the last. Some, pass through the valley of death, with the mind in a deep sleep, or in a state of raving madness. But to all, the entrance into eternity is the same. When the last sigh is drawn, the soul hath entered into the joy of the Lord. The spirit, which one instant before, was confined within a suffering body, perhaps scarcely conscious of existence, is now free, and pure, and happy. The lifeless clay, lies, still warm, on the bed of death, surrounded by weeping friends; but, already hath the spirit beheld the glory of God, and offered the incense of praise unto the Lamb. How glorious the change! how sudden the bliss! Jesus, with his dying voice, spake words of comfort, to the thief upon the cross. "Verily I say unto thee, this day, shalt thou be with me in Paradise." It behoved Jesus to enter from the time of his death, till the hour of his resurrection, into this place, and to prepare the way for his followers. When the last struggle of nature was over, and the redeemed thief was released from earth, behold, in a moment, his spirit stood before that Saviour, who had suffered with him on the cross. He found himself in his presence, and brake forth in the grateful song of praise. Every pardoned sinner, every redeemed soul, shall, alike suddenly, behold the King in his glory, and sing with equal joy the praises of the cross. The night of sorrow draweth to an end, the morning light approaches, I have a desire to depart and be for ever

with the Lord, but I will wait patiently until my change come. Then shall I, also enter into the abode of the just. I, a poor, a frail, a guilty sinner, even I, through the rich mercy of God, through the Captain of salvation, shall triumph over death, and join in ascribing praise, and honour, and glory unto Him who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever.

That hour, when the body shall be raised, to receive the soul, is known only to God. The day of the Lord, shall come suddenly as a thief in the night. The trumpet shall sound, when it is least expected. It is heard on earth, by those who thought not of it. It is heard in heaven, by those who knew not when it was to sound. In a moment, the armies of heaven attend their Lord. The spirits of the just, descend to meet their rising bodies, and now the end of all things is at hand. The work of redemption is finished. The kingdom of heaven is established. An everlasting hallelujah, is uttered by the hosts of heaven, and by the glorious multitude of the redeemed from among men.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE PREPARATION FOR THE FUTURE STATE OF
HAPPINESS.

I.

HAVING considered the nature of the heavenly state, the next object of inquiry, naturally is, how we are prepared for it, and made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints.

The inheritance, consists in a state, in which, sin shall be completely subdued, and cease to exist—in which, the soul shall be filled with the Divine Spirit, and made altogether holy—in which, love to God shall be fervent and supreme, vicious self-love shall be destroyed, and we shall love kindred spirits as we do ourselves—in which, we shall obey God without reserve, and find our highest happiness in serving him, in contemplating and adoring his infinite perfections, and in offering praise and grateful blessing, for the everlasting salvation we have received.

The preparation, for this glorious inheritance, must, of necessity, consist in cultivating those affections which shall then prevail, and beginning the state of heaven on earth. This is the perpetual work, the essential duty of the Christian in this life, and necessarily arises from, and implies the existence of that faith which overcometh the world, and carrieth up the mind to heaven. For, who can prepare for a state, which he hath no hope of reaching? and who that does not possess the principle of faith, and the

Spirit of God, can renounce this world, and set his affections on things which are invisible?

The first and great object, then, of the Christian, here, is to have his faith constant, lively, and increasing. This is to be earnestly asked, for it is a gift from the Giver of all good. The disciples did not say, Lord, we have faith, which we will daily invigorate; but they prayed, "Lord, increase our faith." The gift of faith had already been bestowed; they now desired that it might be increased. Faith, is wrought in the souls of their successors, by the Holy Spirit. Both the original gift, and its subsequent increase, proceed from the rich mercy of God, but it is nevertheless true, that this increase, is given most readily, to those who use the appointed, and natural means, for obtaining it. He who prays for an increase of faith, must not be inactive. He must consider, what faith is, from what it is to deliver him, and where it is to carry him. He must reflect on him who is the object of his faith, and contemplate the work he hath accomplished. He must seriously consider, the dreadful nature of sin, how hateful it is to God, and how dangerous it is to his own soul. He must have faith, firm and impressive faith, in the holy truth of God, when he declared, that no sinner shall stand before him, as well as faith in his promise of mercy, through a Deliverer. He must be convinced, that there is no other way of being reconciled to God, than through the mediation of Jesus Christ, who obeyed the law which he had broken, this perfect obedience or righteousness, being imputed to him; who offered himself as a sacrifice for his sins, this punishment being also imputed to him; and who hath by his obedience and sufferings, purchased for him everlasting life; and who doth send the Holy Spirit to unite him to himself, making him a part of his own body, delivering him from the

power of sin, and sanctifying his whole soul, filling it with the principle of love, both to God and man. He must meditate, frequently and seriously, on the history of his Redeemer, the greatness of his love, the sufficiency and permanency of his atonement, the extent of his redemption, the security of his redeemed, the promise of his Spirit, and the hope of his calling. He cannot, indeed, by these meditations, increase his faith, more than he could at first produce it. He cannot, by volition, acquire the Holy Spirit. Faith and sanctification, are the gift of God; but he can solicit an increase of both. He can use those endeavours, and reflect on those subjects, which tend to promote his edification and comfort. He can earnestly ask, and he has the promise, of the God of truth, that to him who asketh shall be given.

There are different degrees of faith, but the principle, itself, is essential to a Christian. Some, are represented as being full of faith, others, as possessing it, only, as a mustard seed. But, in whatever degree it exist, its nature is the same, and its effects are similar. It ruleth in the heart, it operateth on the thoughts and actions; it is a living principle in the mind of man. It overcometh the world, and no faith is genuine, which hath not this property. It is to the soul, what life is to the body. It is the spring, whence every good work, every holy affection proceeds; and it, again, is animated and invigorated, by these works and affections. In the same way, life, is the cause, why food nourisheth the body, and food, again, is the mean of supporting life. We can no more begin faith, than we can communicate life. We can no more, of ourselves, increase faith, than we can increase our vigour, or improve our health. God hath, indeed, appointed means for both, but these operate, only, by his blessing and

direction. We may, by care and diligence, preserve or increase our strength, but these means can only have the desired effect, if God will it. How often does the body sink and waste, under the best management? and shall we suppose, that the soul, is more under our control, than the body? There is, however, this difference, that whilst the means employed, for promoting or restoring health, shall fail or prove successful, according as the state, or existence, of the body, shall accord with the plans of Providence, and our spiritual benefit, we know, that fervent supplication, and the use of the other appointed means, for promoting and obtaining, an increase of faith, shall invariably procure, at length, the desired object. Jesus, the Son of God, the great High Priest of the saints, is the author and the finisher of faith. He prayed for Peter, that his faith might not fail; and he prays for all his followers. He presents himself, not indeed bodily, before them, saying, Behold the print of the nails, in my hands and in my feet, and be not faithless but believing. Yet, by his Spirit he is present with them. He convinces them of his power to save, of his will to save, and of his unchangeable love, to those who receive him as their Saviour. He enables them to believe in him, whom they have not seen, to love him, though they see him not, and believing, to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Their faith, through the Divine power, subdues the sinful propensities of the heart, fills it with love, excites holy affections, raises the soul above the vanities of time, and carries it on to the glories of eternity. Well, then, may we pray for an increase of faith, earnestly may we desire it, for it is the vital principle, wrought in us, by the Spirit of God, and through which, we are united to Christ, and made partakers, both of his sufferings and of his glory.

Faith is an act of the understanding, but is not confined to the understanding. It is an active principle, influencing the will, purifying the heart, and, consequently, governing the life. It must be founded on knowledge, and must produce a fixed, and determined, purpose of the will. Its objects exist, quite independently, of our apprehension of them, or opinion respecting them. The abstract qualities, of truth and falsehood, right and wrong, do not depend on our judgment, or apprehension combined with opinion. Truth is immutable, and is neither affected by our discovery of it, nor by our belief. The opinions of different people, respecting right and wrong, are various, but the qualities themselves are fixed. Were this not the case, the whole moral world should be full of confusion. But, although truth be immutable, yet the belief of it is affected by various circumstances, particularly, by the degree of knowledge we possess, and the force of prejudice. That Jesus Christ, is the Saviour of the world, is an immutable truth, whether mankind admit or deny it. They are convinced it is a truth, by the word of God, and they receive the Bible as this word, on satisfactory evidence. Reconciliation, through Christ, is the great truth, revealed in the gospel. Jesus prayed for his disciples, that they might be sanctified, or consecrated, through the truth, and immediately added, "thy word is truth." He declared himself to be "the way, the truth, and the life;" and, before Pilate, affirmed that he came to bear witness to the truth, and that they, who were of the truth, heard his voice. The Roman governor, hastily inquired, "What is truth?" but he wished not to examine it, for he immediately went out.

God had declared, that the first act of disobedience, should be followed by death, "In the day, that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." The father

of lies hath said, "Ye shall not surely die." One of these propositions, only, could be true, and the first actual offence committed by the serpent in this world, was, introducing falsehood in place of truth; and, whilst by disobeying the command, Adam destroyed his holiness, he added, to the offence of disobedience, that of disbelieving the truth of God, and giving credence to that which was not true, thus, preferring a false, to a correct belief. The truth of God was at issue, and now was the time, when it was to be manifested. Jesus came, in all his work, and in all his sufferings, to vindicate the truth of God, and triumphantly to reconcile that, with a glorious display of mercy and grace. He came to bear witness to the truth, and no one can find him to be the way, whereby he can come to God, even the source of eternal life, unless he also discover him to be the atoning sacrifice for sin, and thus admit, his whole work to afford, a manifestation of the truth of God, when he declared, that the soul which sinneth shall die.

Every belief, which is not intuitive, must be founded on a knowledge of proper testimony, and on the exercise of the faculty of judgment. Now, as thoughts may pass through the mind, without our apprehension of them, owing to want of attention, so we may, from a similar cause, omit forming a judgment of what we do apprehend. But the truth of a proposition, and the obligation to belief, are not, in any degree, affected by our inattention. This is a most important fact, and calls forcibly on all men, to inquire into moral truths, and particularly into that most valuable of all truth, that Jesus Christ came into the world, to save sinners. Those, who have never heard of the truths of the gospel, cannot be called on to believe them; but to such men I am not speaking. The heathen, possess a law in their

heart, informing them of what is right and what is wrong. What punishment they may receive, for transgressing that law, or what benefit Christ may extend to them, are points on which we are very ignorant, and, in which, we are not personally interested. But in this land, all have the means of acquiring that knowledge, which is the foundation of faith; for reason declares, and an apostle confirms the declaration, that "faith cometh by hearing." We must apprehend the propositions, contained in the scriptures, respecting salvation, and we must believe them. But there is a speculative belief, and an active belief, or saving faith. He who believes on good evidence, that he stands on a mine, ready to be sprung, flees instantly from the place. He is interested in the belief. He believes not only the fact, but is convinced of its importance, with regard to himself. If he only simply believed the fact, he would, probably, remain where he was. If he believed that he stood over a mine, but was not assured, that it was ready to be blown up, he would, if he had strong inducement to remain, do so, but still with an intention, of leaving the place, before he expected the danger. So it is in belief of the gospel. The man who is powerfully convinced of his present and great danger, flees at once to the place of refuge. But he, who merely assents to the truth, is willing to indulge a little longer in the pleasures of sin, intending, however, to seek safety on a future day; whether that day may ever come, depends on the grace of God, which snatches him from danger. Now, here comes the difference, between the speculations of philosophers, and the power of the gospel. The hearer of the word, the possessor of knowledge, may admit the truth of all the doctrines of salvation, not merely verbally, but also in his mind, and yet he may not be saved; he may even be a notorious

transgressor. A variety of circumstances, may arrest his purpose of reformation, and it is only the interposition of God, which can make him renounce present gratifications, for the hope of heaven. Jesus saith, that in the last day, many who have called him Lord, will plead that speculative belief, as a ground of acceptance, but he hath declared, he will not know them. His faithful minister, Paul, affirms, that no man can call Jesus "Lord," but by the Spirit of God. Surely, he cannot mean, that no man can pronounce that word, or, by evidence admit that he is the Messiah. No; but he cannot do so, with active faith, and full purpose of heart, to receive Jesus, as his Redeemer. Paul also tells the Corinthians, that he did not speak to them in man's wisdom, nor trust to reasoning and philosophy, for the success of his preaching. He did not preach with enticing words, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. There are men, who believe unto salvation, and there are others, who believe not unto salvation. Both of these descriptions possess the same information—both admit the truth of it; but their application of it to the heart, their personal interest in this knowledge and belief, is totally different as well as its effect upon their whole mind, will, conduct, and affections, and can only be accounted for, by the operation of the Spirit. If it be said, that the conduct proceeds, originally, from keen conviction of danger, I grant that it generally is so. But the danger is the same to both, and both admit it to be great; but the one sees it near, the other remote, and this strong feeling, in the one case, can only proceed from the agency of the Spirit. There is also a farther view to be taken of this matter. Faith in the truth is not partial, but extends to every doctrine of the gospel; and the belief, if firm and lively, naturally produces a fixed purpose of the

heart, a determination of the will. Paul, for good reasons, was determined to know nothing, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Belief must be always, more or less, active, and to be effectual, it must be universal. A man may believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and a divine person, and yet, he may not believe, that he is a vicarious sacrifice. He may believe one truth, but not every truth, necessary to salvation. He may be strongly persuaded of the danger of sin, and desirous to be saved, by Jesus, from its punishment; and yet, may not believe that it is exceedingly sinful, and hate it with perfect hatred. He may not understand, that he who is to be saved, from the consequences of sin, must abhor sin, and that Jesus, when he saves from its punishment, redeems also from its power, and destroys its love. Many, in the near prospect of death, flee to Jesus, for refuge from the wrath of God, and even think they hate sin; but, when they recover, it appears they hated sin, only, on account of its consequences, and did not seek to be rescued from its dominion.

But there are some, who do not even assent, to the truths contained in the gospel. They deny many, perhaps the whole of them. Whence cometh error, and disbelief of the truth? The question is of the greatest importance, both to Christians and infidels. Ignorance, either of facts or principles, necessary to the formation of a correct judgment, is one of the principal causes of error. He, then, who is sincerely desirous to discover the truth of religion, must inquire into the evidence, proving that the Bible is the word of God, and, having satisfied himself on this point, he is to search the scriptures for knowledge. He is to receive every word therein contained, as the word of the God of wisdom and truth, and he is to receive the knowledge communi-

cated, without alteration of any kind. Wilful ignorance, is no excuse for error, in opinion or practice. Every man, is accountable, for what he might have known. He who, either neglects to procure all the information in his power, or, who requires more irresistible evidence to convince him, than the generality of mankind, or than the subject requires, is culpable. Was not Thomas reproved, by Jesus, for refusing to believe the resurrection, though testified by sufficient evidence, and for demanding ocular demonstration? Indolence, in searching into the truth, and in examining evidence, is a great cause of the prevalence of ignorance. Where indolence does not prevail, obstinacy in a preconceived opinion, and an unwillingness to be convinced, contribute powerfully to error. There never yet was an infidel, or an unbeliever in any essential doctrine of the gospel, who remained so, if he consulted the word of God, without prejudice, and in that state of mind, advised by Jesus and his apostles, namely, as a babe, willing to be instructed, ready to be convinced. Another cause of error is, an over-weening conceit of the powers of the human mind, an imprudent confidence in the strength of reason, or the deductions of metaphysics. Pride of understanding, has long been an obstacle to the belief of that religion, which humbles the vanity of man, for even in the days of Paul, the gospel was, to the Greeks, foolishness. He is most likely to become wise, who is diffident of his own acquirements and abilities, and who, in the investigation of religious truth, implores the assistance of the Divine Spirit, to enlighten his understanding, and sanctify his heart. A partial and prejudiced view of a subject is another cause of error. Various circumstances may contribute to this, and it operates in different ways. Prejudice, may proceed from habits of thinking. and the influence of the imagina-

tion and passions, and is the same in principle, whether it lead to scepticism, or enthusiasm, to the conceit of a philosopher, or the spirit of a sect. An undue attachment to an artificial system, may prevent the discernment of any truth which does not coincide with it. An imprudent love of simplicity, or an improper regard for one principle, to the neglect of others, operates in this way. We also find, that a strong view of the error, of one extreme, is apt to force the mind, with precipitation, to the opposite, which may be equally erroneous. Error, may likewise spring from the habit, which some have, of stopping short, in the investigation of facts and truths, and supplying deficiency, by the imagination, through the aid of general principles. This is too often the case with men of genius, but it is not peculiar to them, for men of low attainments, or great indolence, may do the same. On this principle, reasoning from analogy is always doubtful, for we are thus very apt to decide upon what we think ought, rather than what we can prove, actually, to be the case.

The influence of precept and example, is another cause biasing the judgment. It is indeed essential in the education and improvement of youth ; but at an adult age, it ought not to be encouraged, without great circumspection. The unthinking part of mankind, are governed more by this, than by any other influence. It often acts, by the association of character with opinion. The character for sanctity, may recommend very mistaken opinions. It is worthy of observation, that men, generally, choose the worst parts of a Christian, for imitation, and, in point of belief, admit, most readily, those doctrines, to which their disposition disposes them. In judging of an example to be followed, and precepts to be received, we can never go wrong, if we consult the scriptures—the unerring rule of truth.

Many, are led away by false, and improper, association of words and ideas. Hence, the influence of epithets, in discourses, on those who are more attracted by sound than sense. I question not, that some are led away so much in this way, that they would hear, with complacency, of holy pride, though they would be shocked at the expression, of holy intemperance; yet intemperance is just as holy as pride, and pride as robbery. How many admit a whole sentence, nay a whole chapter, for the sake of a single word? heaven, salvation, goodness, piety, immortal happiness, are expressions, which often make poison pass for nutriment, and the cold compilation of the mere moralist, for the admonitions of Jesus.

Sophistical reasoning, is another frequent cause of error. It blinds others, and it is, also, exceedingly apt to pervert our own judgment. It requires, often, the diligent exercise of the judgment, to detect the fallacy both of the reasoning of others, and of the operations of our own minds. Amongst other causes, I would particularly caution against the following—departing from the point in question, and proving something, which appears to determine the case, but which actually affords no proof; taking for granted, premises which are not established; reasoning in a circle, that is making the same thing, both the proof and the conclusion; assigning a false cause, deducing general conclusions, from what is true, only, of a particular case, and considering an accidental circumstance as a necessary property. No conclusion is more false, than that, drawn by sophistical arguments, that it matters little in religion what a man believes, if his practice be good. No man's practice can be good, if his principles of belief be wrong. The best life is a bad life, if it do not proceed from love to God, and faith in Jesus. They who maintain

the contrary, must prove man to be only an active, but not an intelligent, creature. The gospel does not only require moral conduct, it does not only demand acts of obedience, but it insists on the proper exercise of the understanding. It says to every one, "believe."

Our judgment, and more especially our conduct, are apt to be perverted by our passions. This will be very readily admitted, by all who acknowledge the original corruption of our nature, or who have attended to the difficulty of regulating the passions by reason.

The agency of evil spirits must also be admitted. For, however unfashionable it may be in metaphysics, to introduce their influence, it is nevertheless true, that some are under the power of Satan. They are blinded by the god of this world, who operates through the natural propensity of man, to yield most readily, to the influence of present objects. Other causes, no doubt, contribute, besides those enumerated, to the production of error in general, and of an evil heart of unbelief in particular. But I need not at present prosecute the inquiry, as I am persuaded, whoever diligently endeavours to overcome those which have been mentioned, will discover, and break loose, from, any other, which may operate in his case.

But another question arises, which must be shortly answered. When men assent to the truth, and believe it, why do they not act on this belief? This I have already in some manner pointed out, and it becomes every man, seriously, to consider the matter. Jesus, solemnly admonished Martha, that "one thing is needful;" and most readers of the gospel believe that Jesus really did say so; they believe it, as firmly, as if they had heard his voice, and they admit that the proposition is true. They believe that the mean

of salvation, is the one thing needful, but they still may not instantly and ardently seek it; they may not sell all that they have, to buy this pearl of great price. This is owing to many causes, operating, in various cases, in different degrees. It is owing to the natural corruption of the heart, and the predominant bias to evil; to the influence of present objects and allurements; to indolence and procrastination; to dislike to the service of God; to imperfect knowledge of the truths of the gospel, and vague or prejudiced notions of the attributes of God; to the force of previous habits; to the suggestions of Satan; and to not seeking the power of the Spirit of God.

It has been maintained, that a man is not responsible for his belief, because he cannot alter it. This is true with regard to those, who, from a disordered mind, or weakness of understanding, are unable to judge, according to the ordinary rules of reasoning, and such men are either confined, or put under the care of guardians. In no case, except that of religion, and questions connected with it, is the position conceded, and it so happens, that this is the very worst case in which it can be admitted. There are two classes of men, interested in this discussion; those, who deny the authority of the scriptures altogether, and those, who, admitting the truth of the revelation, draw erroneous conclusions from it. The evidence, in favour of the authenticity and authority of the scriptures, is so conclusive, that the infidel is left without excuse, and it will be difficult to prove, that any one ever yet sat down, with a sincere desire to come at the truth, who did not, ultimately, obtain such convincing proofs, as forced him to admit the authenticity, and divine authority of the Bible. But a greater number, whilst they admit the authority, disbelieve many of the doctrines, or give their own interpretation to them, and the question, in this case,

comes to be, how far they are responsible for their erroneous belief. Now, as a preliminary, I concede that he, who, after dispassionate investigation, still believes in error, is less criminal, than he who maintains that error, without consideration, or perhaps without conviction. But the concession is of less value, however limited, than it appears to be; for, I go so far, as to maintain, that no man can, for a length of time, continue in error, who, without any prejudice and in perfect sincerity, does ardently inquire after the truth, and pray for the guidance and illumination of the Spirit. If he come, in any other way, to the investigation, than in that, which is appointed, he has no reason to claim indemnity for his error. If he come as a child, seeking the light of the Spirit, he cannot long remain in error. The reason that he ever was in error, was ignorance, and he not only was ignorant, and prejudiced in favour of his own opinion, but either was so satisfied with it, that he would not be at the trouble to inquire, or so indifferent, that he thought it of no importance, and, yet, this is the man, who wishes to shake off responsibility, and shelter himself behind the plea of necessity. He chooses out for himself, or imbibes from his infancy, some special system of opinions, and if he inquire at all into its correctness, he feels that he is more anxious to find reasons in support of, than in opposition to, his system. I do not apply this to erroneous belief alone. It is a fault into which every one is prone to fall; but whether his opinion be true or false, it ought to be both carefully and candidly considered, and with the impression, that his belief cannot make that right which is wrong, or that true which is false, or absolve him from responsibility, if he be in error. If there were any proof wanting of this, we have only to look at the circumstance attending the very first transgression. Will it be said, that

Adam believed, that he should really die, if he ate the fruit? Did his disbelief of the truth exempt him from the penalty? Would any one, then, wish to know, how far he is responsible for his belief, let him go, with humility, and seek information, in the garden of Eden, or in the daily manifestations of the curse, which abideth on the children of him, who was beguiled by the serpent, and on the world in which they dwell. Man, must take the revelation as a whole, or not at all. He must try his opinion, by the legitimate test, and taking the scripture as it stands, in the ordinary meaning of words, apply, to this revelation, the understanding he is possessed of, and pray earnestly for instruction. The scripture is the rule, and nowhere promises the true knowledge, except through the Spirit. This is one of the fundamental principles, supported by many texts, and if not complied with, then, weak, indeed, is the plea of exemption. We are told, that reason alone ought to decide, and that the doctrine, which is not so plainly revealed, as that he who runs may read, cannot be true. Now, although the doctrine must not be against reason, it may not be so very plain, as, all at once, to appear as truth, to a mind either ignorant or prejudiced. It is revealed in such plain terms, as will suffice for the earnest inquirer, but he has no right to ask for the very phrase and commentary, which his conceit might think proper. Our Saviour has decided the question of responsibility, very clearly, for when asked to give a sign, and then the Jews would believe, he refused the demand; and, when deploring the obstinate infidelity, or erroneous belief of the people, he declared, that the mighty works he had performed, and performed in vain with regard to them, would have been quite sufficient to have produced repentance, even in Sodom. When on the cross, the Jews called on him to come down,

and then they would believe. Satisfactory communication, and evidence, such as is sufficient to convince a candid and reasonable man, is all that can be asked, or will be afforded; and he who will not examine the evidence, in favour of Christianity in general, or of its doctrines in detail, as they are stated and revealed, and will not do so, in the way expressly pointed out, is as certainly responsible for his error, however strongly he may believe in it, as if he persisted in it, contrary to his belief. The degree of guilt is very different in these two cases, but in both it is decided and inexcusable.

Considering the importance of the subject, I hope that these remarks, on the belief of the truth, and the detection of error, shall not appear to be misplaced, nor be altogether useless. I must now, once more, advert to the fundamental proposition, that faith, to be beneficial, must be active, and not merely speculative. It is not enough, to know, and assent to, the doctrines of the gospel, they must be accepted, and their practical precepts obeyed. It is a dreadful error, to suppose, that Jesus came to save men from the punishment of sin, without redeeming them, also, from its power, or, that he hath gone to heaven to prepare a place for them, without, at the same time, preparing them for that place.

II.

The life of a Christian, is compared to a race and a warfare, to convince men, that they who expect to reach heaven, must be active, and strive to attain perfection. The gospel, indeed, nowhere promises salvation, as the reward of obedience; it nowhere countenances the idea, "that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God;" it nowhere, gratifies the pride

of man, by encouraging the belief, that his own moral virtue, his own righteousness, can be a ground of justification in the sight of God; it nowhere, leads him to hope, that a most imperfect obedience, will be accepted, in place of that, which the holy and strict law of God requires. But, whilst the gospel humbles the pride of man, and shows him that Jesus is the only "way," it also declares, that he who trusts to a speculative or merely intellectual faith, without having the heart purified, trusteth to a principle, which is dead and useless. The necessity of holiness, is evident from the Mosaic law, and the precepts of Jesus and his apostles. The connexion between the passover of the Jews, and the sacrifice of the Messiah, is so striking, that no Christian can be ignorant of it. By the law of Moses, the passover, and feast of unleavened bread, which began the day after it, were enjoined, with so much force and strictness, that it was declared, that he who was clean and not on a journey, and yet refrained from keeping the passover, should be cut off from among his people, and bear his sin. Yet, although this sacrifice were so necessary, no one was permitted to partake of it, who was unclean. He who wilfully neglected it, and he who kept it, being unclean, were alike guilty. But so essential was it to the salvation of a Jew, that, for the sake of those who were unclean, at the regular feast, a second passover, was permitted to them on the same day of the succeeding month.

This very pointed law ought to be of great importance to us, who admit, with Paul, that Christ is our passover, proving, on the one hand, that they who reject or despise him, and, on the other, that they who trust to his atonement, without personal holiness, are both cut off from among his people.

Jesus, uniformly insisted on the necessity of reformation, and purity of heart, and laid down this plain

rule, for distinguishing true, from false, disciples, “by their fruits, ye shall know them.” To his followers, he gave, amongst others, two important admonitions, “If ye love me, keep my commandments;” “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love.” To distinguish those who do, from those who do not, keep the commandments of Jesus, is not always easy in this life, but in the great day of judgment, Jesus “shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather, out of his kingdom, all things that offend, and them who do iniquity.”

This doctrine, is also fully laid down by the apostles;—one of them saith, “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which, no man shall see the Lord.” Now, holiness, is purity in the most extensive signification, and in morals, the two terms are synonymous. The word holy, which is of Saxon derivation, is employed to translate the Latin word, *sanctus*, and the Greek *ἅγιος*. This last, is used to render the Hebrew word, which signifies clean. It is also applied to persons and things, appropriated or consecrated to the service of God, and to beings, who, from their nature, are worthy of honour and veneration. But its principal application is, metaphorically, to denote purity of spirit and a guiltless state. When the word *ἅγιος* then, is applied to the heart, it is practically the same with *καθαρός*, or clean. This last expression is used by our Lord, who says, blessed are the pure, or clean in heart, for they shall see God, and the apostle reminds his readers, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. But although, in respect to moral conduct, holy and pure be synonymous terms, yet in respect of condition, they are not; for that which is holy, is sacred, or devoted to God and his service. The law, is called holy, because it is pure, and consecrated to the glory of God. Our faith, is called most holy, as redounding

to the honour of God; and for the same reasons, the soul which is holy, must be pure, and devoted to the service of God, free from pollution, devout and pious. This last quality, of piety, is also comprehended under that of holiness, in general language, but, strictly, it is different, and is expressed in scripture, by a different word, *όσιος*. It is, however, an inseparable attendant on holiness, for the heart, which is pure and sanctified, must be pious. I have been led to make these remarks, on the word holy, because, I fear, that many have an indefinite notion of its import. They consider it as an epithet, given to the word of God, to his ordinances, to his people, but are not aware, that no man can be holy, merely, by assenting to the truth of the gospel, or, without having his heart purified, and his soul devoted to God. They neither know how he is sanctified by the Spirit, nor what it is to be sanctified. They cannot enter into the sentiments of the apostle, when he prayed for the Thessalonians:—"The very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless, unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ." Holiness and righteousness are not exactly the same; *δικαιοσυνη*, or righteousness, strictly signifies perfect justice—the fulfilment of every duty. The two are, in one sense, the same, in another, they are as cause and effect. Holiness, is moral cleanness from the pollution of sin, and, consequently, there can be no transgression against a law, and must be perfect performance of every duty, or righteousness. Righteousness, being the state in which every right, or law, is fulfilled, holiness must be the quality produced. But holiness, also respects the affections, desires, and the whole heart. As a disposition, it leads to righteousness, or the performance of every obligation, whilst the perfect performance, if it could be accom-

plished, causes moral purity. But righteousness, to produce this, and be acceptable, must be complete and perfect, consisting in the full, and perfect performance, of every duty we owe to God, to men, and to ourselves; and this is not to be found in man, but is graciously imputed to him, through Christ, even the righteousness, which is of God, through faith. The smallest stain, destroys the attribute of holiness; one single sin, were none but one committed, would render an angel impure, and unfit to appear, in the presence of Him, who has declared, that without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. It is quite inconceivable, how any one, possessed of the power of reasoning or of judgment, can imagine, that a creature, who has once sinned, and lost his purity, can be accepted by a holy God, until, he be again made pure, and sanctified by the Spirit, and have imputed to, or, in some way or other, bestowed upon him, a perfect and spotless righteousness.

No man, in this world, has sin eradicated and subdued; his whole life, is a struggle, between the flesh and the spirit. But he is not in this contest, left to his own strength; he is promised the assistance of the Spirit, and is encouraged to look forward, to that happy time, when he shall be altogether holy. In the meantime, he is called to aim at christian perfection, to watch and pray, and to press "toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus."

Peter, strongly urges the saints to holiness, "as He who hath called you is holy, so, be ye holy, in all manner of conversation." John, animates them with the hope of glory, and draws this practical conclusion, "every man, that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure." Paul, beseeches the Ephesians to "walk worthy of the vocation,

wherewith they are called." No man can do so, or can be said to know the hope of his calling, who does not know, that it is a "holy calling." Titus, is exhorted to maintain good works; and the Corinthians, after being reminded that the Spirit dwelleth in their souls, as a temple, are solemnly warned, that "if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." To the Philippians, it is written, "Work out your own salvation, with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure." We are called, then, to work with God, and not resist his Holy Spirit. We are created, in Christ, unto good works, and he who neglects these, who omits his duties, neglects the end, for which man was created at first, and for which, he is renewed in Christ Jesus. It is the Spirit of God, which dwelleth in us, that "casteth down imaginations, and every high thing, that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity, every thought, to the obedience of Christ;" and the love of Christ constraineth us, to live, not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us.

After what has been said, in a former part of this work, and what remains to be urged, with regard to particular parts of our conduct, I do not consider it as necessary to say more at present on this subject.

The ends for which man was created, were, to glorify God and enjoy him for ever, and every thought and action, ought to be directed to these ends. Therefore, in one view, every duty of life may be said to be a duty to God, both, because every thing ought to be done with this intention, and, also, because it is his law and revealed will, which makes it a duty. On the other hand, the performance of every duty, is beneficial to ourselves, and in this view, it is a duty we owe to ourselves. Premising this close connexion,

of different classes of duties, I remark, that for the sake of arrangement, they have, by the ancient philosophers, been divided into,

First, Personal duties, or those we owe to ourselves.

Second, Relative, or those we owe to others.

Third, Duties to God.

All duties may be classed under one or other of these divisions, according as they are, more or less immediately, connected with the natural obligations, we owe to ourselves, to our fellow creatures, and to God. I proceed to a short consideration of several of these duties.

CHAPTER VI.

OF PERSONAL DUTIES.

I.

THE acquirement of knowledge, is one of the first and most necessary duties we owe to ourselves, for knowledge is the foundation of all wisdom, and the basis on which our happiness rests. I am, indeed, far from maintaining, that human learning is requisite in order to understand those truths, which are necessary for salvation, because Jesus came to preach the gospel to the poor and the ignorant. But I think he must be blinded by prejudice, indeed, who denies the utility of improving the mind and enlarging its powers, so as to enter more fully into all the circumstances, which can be discovered, respecting those mysteries of redemption, into which angels look with earnestness. Besides, the cultivation of the mind and the habitual application of its faculties to useful purposes, is an express command of God, who ordains each one to improve every advantage in his power, and, amongst others, the intellectual talent committed unto him. How beneficial this is to society, and, to the interests of the human race in general, or how assuredly it is the source of the most refined pleasure to ourselves, I should deem it an insult to the reader to attempt to prove. If it be incumbent on every one, as far as his situation in life will permit, to cultivate and regulate his mental powers, and to add to general knowledge, it is still more his indispensable

duty, to become well acquainted “with those things, which belong to his everlasting peace,” and to “know whom he hath believed.” Faith must be founded on knowledge, and this knowledge is alone to be obtained from the holy scriptures, which are able to make us “wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus.” It was the prayer of Paul, for the Ephesians, that they might obtain “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ : the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they might know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance of the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe.” Now, these important advantages were to be obtained by knowledge, acquired by the assistance of the Spirit of wisdom, for they were informed, that, naturally, the understanding was darkened, because of the blindness of their heart. But this Spirit instructed them, and is promised to instruct us also. If we would know what is the hope of his calling, we must know what the calling is, for, we must understand who calls us, and to what we are called, before we indulge hope. The apostle says, we are called “unto the kingdom and glory” of God, “who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purposes and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began, but is now made manifest, by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel.” We may, then, well style this an holy calling, and indulge, through it, the hope of immortal glory. The prayer of the apostle, in this respect is, that the Ephesians may become well acquainted with the doctrine of the cross, and the benefits of redemption. But he further prays, that they may know,

not only the hope of his calling, but the riches of the glory of his inheritance. Now, if we would inquire into this, we find the apostle, elsewhere, telling them, that it "is Christ in you the hope of glory," praying that God would "grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened, with might, by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." They who are thus strengthened, according to the riches of his glory, being rooted and grounded in love, are able to comprehend the love of Christ, which passeth human knowledge, and, from the inexhaustible riches of the Spirit, springeth up naturally the fruit of the Spirit, namely, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." The knowledge, which the apostle prays that the Ephesians might obtain, through the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, is not mere speculative knowledge, but a knowledge, coming in the power and demonstration of the Spirit, enlightening the understanding, and influencing the heart. The faith of Christians, is not to be wavering, but "grounded and settled." They are required to know Jesus and his gospel, that they may be "rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith." It is not the imagination which is to be interested. It is not the passions which are to operate. It is not the opinions of men which are to govern them. They are to examine the truth of the gospel, to be convinced that the Bible is the word of God, and that the offer of salvation, through Jesus, is an offer from God. They are to be convinced that they require a Saviour, and that Jesus is such a Saviour as they require. They are to be convinced that He alone can save them, and His Spirit alone make them holy. They are to know, and believe, the doctrine of the grace of God, and the truth of all the articles of faith which they

profess. The judgment must be fully satisfied, and the understanding must go along with the heart. The Divine revelation must be cordially received as Divine truth ; but, before it can be received, it must be known and understood. For this purpose we pray for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, which Paul so earnestly wished the Colossians to obtain, that we may discover “ the mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations, but now is made manifest to the saints, to whom God would make known, what is the riches of the glory of this mystery, among the Gentiles, which is Christ, in us, the hope of glory.” “ That our hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

“ Search the Scriptures,” is the admonition of our Lord : an admonition imperative on every mortal. As there is but one baptism, so there is but one true doctrine, one faith, one way to eternal life. It is therefore, scarcely a matter of choice, but an act of necessity, that we examine the truth of our opinions, and the reason of the hope that is in us. Alas ! how many different heresies exist in the world ! Whilst one denies the necessity of works, and trusts to a dead faith, another, with equal error, rejects the atonement, and trusts to his own righteousness. Whilst one hopes in the mercy of God, without any consideration of his justice, another trusts to the relaxation of his law, to meet his mercy. One denies the personality of the Spirit, another the divinity of the Son, and some question both. To all men, orthodox or heterodox, the admonition is important beyond all the power of language to describe, for, no man has more than one soul to lose or to save, or more than

one judgment to receive. Those, who doubt the authority of the scriptures, are bound, as they value their everlasting happiness, to investigate fully the evidence on which it rests ; but to such I do not speak at present. Those, who admit the opinion of Paul, that all scripture is given by inspiration and is profitable for instruction in righteousness, will do well to examine, how far their faith corresponds with the doctrine of Jesus and his apostles. In this examination, it becomes them, as frail and ignorant creatures, to pray earnestly and constantly for the blessing of God, for the spirit of wisdom and revelation in searching the scriptures, that they may be directed to the knowledge of the Lord. I am persuaded, and rejoice in the persuasion, that no man can, as having the happiness or misery of eternity at stake, sit down to examine the holy scriptures in quest of knowledge, praying for the illumination of the Spirit, and resigning himself to His guidance, and yet be perplexed, and left in ignorance of the truth. If the disciples, when our Lord was on earth, had his opinion to resort to in all cases, we, their followers, have his promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." His Spirit is ever present, to those who call upon him in sincerity and in truth. To such, but to such alone, he hath promised his aid ; for they who search the scriptures, not for the knowledge of the gospel, but with a view to pick out texts to support a system, have no title to expect his guidance. Like Paul, when journeying to Damascus, they may, indeed, suddenly see a great light, and become everlasting monuments of the grace and power of God. Although they have no right to expect it, no promise to claim, they may nevertheless be led to conclusions, far different from those they intended, and in spite of their own philosophy, falsely so called, may be made to bend to the force

of truth, rather than wrest the scriptures to their own destruction.

With regard to the source of our knowledge, there can, with Christians, be no denial that it is to be sought, entirely, in the word of God. Therefore it becomes the duty of every one, carefully, and daily, to study this. How many are indebted for all the knowledge they possess of the scriptures, to the custom of reading them in schools, or to the occasional hearing of them read in a church, or to a short glance at them on a Sunday evening? Such was not the conduct of the man after God's own heart, who in his devotions, made it his earnest desire, "Teach me thy statutes. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law. Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." And he gratefully acknowledges, "The entrance of thy words giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Paul, was animated with the same spirit, when he reminded Timothy of his advantages, saying, "From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." If this be the opinion of an apostle, of a man writing by the direction of the Spirit of God, can it be a question with any Christian, how far it is binding on him, daily, to read and meditate upon a portion of the Scripture? The advantages are clearly pointed out in the passage just quoted. They are, information respecting true doctrine, reproof of personal sins, correction of errors, instruction in duties, and aid in every attempt towards christian perfection.

For these purposes there is no necessity for reading long—it is not quantity that is to prove beneficial. It is reading carefully, meditating on the importance of the passage, applying it to our own state, and above all, imploring the assistance and power of the Holy Spirit. The mere reading of the scriptures, can of itself be of very little benefit. It must be done with serious attention, with a desire of improvement, a mind anxious to be instructed, a heart ready to be convinced, a spirit sensible of its imperfections, and its need of divine illumination. It must be done with a view to dispel our ignorance, regulate our conduct, animate our hopes, purify our hearts, and comfort our souls in this vale of tears.

Were a company of intelligent heathens, already, so far instructed and convinced, as to renounce their false worship, to be informed, that a person was on his way to them, bringing a book, containing a message from the true God, and ample information respecting the means of mercy and reconciliation, with how much impatience would they look for his arrival; and when he did come, how urgently would they entreat him, to begin to read “the book in the sight of the people.” Would not this precious book be considered as more estimable, than all the treasure of the land, and become their daily study, as well as their uniform directory? And to transfer the view, from one of these pagans, to a newly convinced sinner, in our own land, do we not in his case, see the same frequency of consultation, the same earnestness of perusal, the same ardent inquiry for instruction and comfort? Is not the blessed volume, the solace of his mourning spirit, his guide in every doubt, his comfort in every situation? Does he not say, with David, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. Thy testimonies have I taken, as an heritage for ever, for they are

the rejoicing of my heart; thy testimonies also are my delight, and my counsellors?" And is the bible less useful, and less valuable, to the advanced Christian, than to the pagan, or the new convert, in our own land, and, yet, do we find that he always has the same interest, and the same pleasure in perusing it? The diminution of either, or of both, should it take place, may, in part, be explained, by the fact, that all first impressions are strongest, and, in the case under consideration, the feeling at first is peculiarly strong and keen, for it is that of escape, from death to life, and he to whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much. But, afterwards, the mind seems to settle down into a systematic belief of the various doctrines, and a general application, or appropriation, of the multiplied promises. Sorry should I be to say, that this change indicates an indifference to the gospel of reconciliation, or to the great Author of redemption. But it does most surely evince, that there is not the same keen sense, of the greatness of the love of Christ, nor the same lively delight, in reading the word of God. It proves that there is not that state of mind, which shall exist in heaven, where the soul shall be filled with the love of God, and delight in the contemplation of his mercy. It marks the great difference, which exists, between the soul on earth, and the soul in heaven, and manifests, beyond all contradiction, that the human mind is quite unable to love, or to serve God, as he requires, and is never, even in the best of men, wholly sanctified here.

There are others, who, if they read the sacred book at all, read it with indifference, and in a disposition inclined to construe its meaning, rather according to their own fancy, than to the words of the record. Would these men, if they had never before heard of a revelation, and were suddenly presented by an

angelic messenger, with even a small portion of the scriptures, not receive that portion with awe, and read it with earnestness and simplicity of heart, as the direct communication from the Almighty. And because they have had a fuller revelation, a more copious book, still coming directly from God, though long in the land, and not sent to them alone, by a special messenger from heaven, are they at liberty to treat it with more indifference, and to interpret its meaning with greater latitude. By the law and the testimony they shall be judged, and it behoves them to look well, and betimes, to the written record.

Knowledge, when acquired, is useless, unless it be applied to some practical purpose. Human learning, one of the merciful gifts of God, is of no use, if it do not advance us in the scale of rational beings, refine the mind, increase our value in society, instruct us how to accomplish our laudable purposes, to provide for our own wants, and to assist our fellow-creatures. But the knowledge which belongs to man, as a moral agent, is peculiarly important, and the practical conclusion from it, is the same with the admonition of the Lord—"seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" that is, seek first, and above all things, eternal happiness, and the means of obtaining it. Having in the commencement of this work, endeavoured to show the advantage of seeking that happiness which is to be perpetual, and the superiority of those things which are unseen and eternal, over those which are present and temporal, I have little to add, except that this is the first, and most necessary duty, a man can perform to himself. It is as superior to all others, as eternity is superior to time. The ancient philosophers disputed about the chief good, but we can have no doubt with regard to our choice, if the pleasures of sin for a season, be put in competition with life ever-

lasting. Man, in this world, must make a choice, either by his will or his conduct. He cannot serve two masters. There is no medium. He must either serve God, or the prince of this world. The words of Elijah may be addressed to him. How long will ye halt between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him—if Baal follow him. He who seeks the kingdom of God, must use the means to obtain it. No man can be said to have made a choice, who does not act on it. No man can truly be said to desire a good, whatever it be, who does not use every mean to obtain it, which is proportioned to its value. If this good be eternal, and great beyond all present joys, beyond all our conception, every temporal consideration must yield. But, if, besides the greatness of the future acquisition, it be evident, that even in this life, the ways of religion are ways of pleasantness and peace, there is an inducement, even from a regard to present happiness, to perform this necessary duty. If, again, we leave its inducements from the nature of the thing itself, and consider the authority by which it is recommended, we must be equally persuaded, for the admonition is given by Him, who spake as never man spake—Him, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom, and who is by the wise man styled “Wisdom.” If Jesus came down from heaven, to obtain this kingdom for men, it must be of a value proportioned to the price he paid; and if he who is “truth,” urges it to be sought first and above all things, it is the greatest of errors to neglect the advice.

If there be one duty a man owes to himself, more important than another, it is that of estimating aright the value of his soul; and, were there a single object, that could be expected to call forth the exertion of one man in favour of another, and particularly of one whom he is deeply interested in, that object would

be, to impress him with a true sense of the importance of his imperishable spirit. A true sense, did I say? No. Language cannot convey such knowledge. The mind of man, here, cannot conceive the value of the soul. It cannot be understood, till we understand that eternity of blessedness, or of woe, which it is sure to experience. He who would endeavour to form some conception, of the value of an everlasting and immortal spirit, may attempt to penetrate, with his imagination, into the abodes of misery, and behold the unceasing agony which is sustained by fallen angels, for a period already far exceeding our knowledge or conception; or, the deep horror of despair, which torments the souls of those who were destroyed by the desolation of the deluge; or the state of that being, who, whilst this line is perusing, may have been hurried to the place of utter darkness, where there is only one continued lamentation, one ever present and agonizing anticipation, of that awful day, when the soul shall be reunited to the body, and sent to undergo, in "the lake of fire," that unutterable anguish, which God hath declared, shall never either end or be mitigated. If, from this scene of horror, he turn the eye to those blessed and glorious spirits, who are rejoicing in all the happiness of heaven, a happiness and a joy as far exceeding the power of comprehension here, on the one hand, as the misery of fallen and lost spirits does on the other, he may form some faint notion of the actual value of a human soul. If he also consider that between these two states of blessedness and misery, and every soul, there is but a short and uncertain separation, and that he is treading on a path which may, in one instant, and without the slightest warning, hurry him hence into the one state or the other, and that for ever and for ever, I am sure he must admit that imagination cannot conceive, far less can words express.

the importance of the soul. It was this importance, this value, of a human soul, so little known and esteemed, by its thoughtless possessor, which made Jesus undertake its ransom. And, can it be supposed, if the salvation of souls, be so precious, as to have demanded the incarnation, and sufferings, and death, of the Son of God, that it must not be precious, beyond all conception. If the blessed Jesus, who knew the value of that soul, he descended from heaven to redeem, wept over the heedless, and impenitent, of his countrymen, how dreadful must be the condition, which called forth the tears of the Redeemer? O! that men in this day of mercy, in this only, but, most uncertain, period of forbearance, would think of those things which belong to their peace, even before it be too late. O! that the writer, and the reader, of this page, knew, as both shall soon know, the value of the human soul, considered in its power, and certainty, of enduring endless misery, or of enjoying eternal felicity. Did we consider, how awful it is to be immortal, and what the consequences are, of possessing an interminable existence, where both recollections of the past, and sure anticipations of the future, shall continually identify themselves with the present, and where there shall be a consciousness, and a feeling, from which we can never flee, never, never separate ourselves, how differently should our life be spent, how insignificant should the evils, and how contemptible the pleasures, of this world, appear to be. How abstracted from the vanities of time, and how absorbed in the glories of eternity, should the mind be. Should it not be the burden, and the grievance, of the heart, that it had not the wings of a dove to fly to the mountains; and that in this scene of care, and of sin, and of the pride of life, and of the intoxication of pleasure, it could not at once quit all, and behold the great and

merciful Deliverer of souls, and exclaim, "Thou knowest all things ; thou knowest that I love thee !"

II.

The next duty after acquiring knowledge, particularly of moral truths, is to cultivate the faculty by which we judge of moral conduct. This, by some, has been called the moral sense, but is generally known by the name of conscience. Like all other faculties it is, in its power and acuteness, under the influence, to a certain degree, of education and culture. It is both an active, and an intellectual power. It is intellectual, inasmuch as by it, we have our notions of right and wrong, merit and demerit, and all moral obligation or sense of duty. It is active, inasmuch as the performance of every duty, of every action receiving approbation, must be more or less influenced by it, or excited by its dictates. Like the other powers of the mind, it comes gradually to perfection, and its progress is much influenced by instruction and unrestrained exercise.

Some have imagined that the ideas of sweet and sour, reside in the mind or senses, altogether independent of the object to which they are referred, and therefore must depend on the state of the mind. That, in the same way, the ideas of virtue and vice, right and wrong, are dependent on a moral sense, in which, and not in the actions or things themselves, these qualities lie. According to this theory, the sole use of reason, is to distinguish between truth and falsehood, whilst virtue and vice, like the notions of beauty and deformity, belong to taste, morality depending on the peculiarity of the sense, which is to perceive it. This theory, subversive of all radical distinction of good and evil, rests on mere assertion,

for, our notions of right and wrong, must be referred to reason and not to taste. The distinctions of right and wrong, are not arbitrary, more than the qualities of sweet and hot. They are immutable, and their nature and existence are no more affected by our taste and judgment, than truth and falsehood, or, than the shining of the sun, is dependent on a man perceiving his light.

If, then, there be a natural distinction between right and wrong, there must be some power of the mind, capable of discovering the difference, in the same way as there is a capability of discriminating between truth and falsehood. Blessed be God, who hath made us rational creatures, and endowed us with those faculties, which, if rightly exercised, lead to happiness and peace. We have a faculty by which we judge of our conduct ; and the decisions it forms, are attended with personal feelings and affections, with a strong sentiment of approbation or disapprobation. They gratify and reward the man, who acts according to the dictates of conscience, or a sense of duty. They torment and punish him who transgresses its laws.

In scripture we find mention made of " a pure conscience," by which we may understand a faculty, capable of readily distinguishing between right and wrong, a well-instructed conscience, and the power of discerning that which is holy. We also read of a conscience void of offence, and the testimony of a good conscience, by which we understand that the dictates of conscience, the decrees of the court, have been obeyed, and that the sentence is favourable. On the other hand, we are told of blindness of mind, and, of a mind and conscience, which are defiled. We therefore from scripture, as well as from reason, may prove the necessity of possessing a good, that is an enlightened conscience, and the testimony of a

conscience void of offence, that is the approbation of this well-instructed faculty. It is the duty of every man to cultivate his conscience, which is done, by making himself well acquainted with the will of God, and those duties ordained by him, and by diligently attending to, and implicitly and promptly obeying, the natural admonitions given by conscience, even to those who are not acquainted with Christianity. It is generally, I do not say universally, the case, that the first and instantaneous decision given on any point, by the unsophisticated conscience, is the most correct. For it often happens during subsequent deliberation, that the judgment comes to be warped, by the special pleading of the inclination. It must, farther, be carefully recollected, that the faculty is apt, imperceptibly, to be influenced by passions and various causes, and therefore it is necessary to compare our judgment with deductions from the proper principles of action, and particularly with the rules delivered in the word of God. Paul thought he acted right in persecuting the Christians, and his error lay, not in following the dictates of a misguided conscience, but in not using all the means in his power to obtain better information, in not candidly examining the grounds on which Christianity rested. A man is always culpable, even when he follows the dictates of conscience, if his conduct be wrong, provided he has neglected any one mean in his power, of instructing his judgment.

III.

Another essential duty is the regulation of our passions and desires, according to the rules of propriety and virtue.

Virtue, is a steady and fixed purpose of the heart, to adhere to principles approved by the sense of duty;

to act according to a rule consonant to the judgment, and declared by it to be duty. Strictly speaking, it is the performance of every duty in a perfect manner, and therefore it is not to be found in any mortal. Particular virtues, are fixed and perpetual purposes, to perform particular duties, as duties. One act of justice, or of benevolence, does not constitute a just or a benevolent man. An act of justice may even be performed without any regard to justice, and, merely, from the influence of passion, or the feeling of the moment. To be an act of virtue, it must be performed from a sense of duty. Virtues have been divided into four, which were called cardinal, and from which all the rest sprung. These are justice, prudence, temperance, and fortitude, giving rise to benevolence, charity, patience, and all those other virtues which adorn and comfort human life.

Vice, is the omission of a duty, or the violation of a positive law. It generally originates from the passions, as virtue does from reason and conscience. It is not an original principle in the mind, for in that case it must have been conferred by the Creator. But it is a perversion of our faculties; and to produce a single vice, the perversion is often very complex. All principles which are good, were originally implanted in man, and he had, by consequence, a principle leading him to dislike and disapprove of evil, though evil did not then exist in his knowledge. When, by sad experience, he acquired the knowledge of good and evil, and his nature became debased, and changed, then, either by desires, in themselves natural and proper, being carried to a degree, disproportionate to the value of their object, or, by the passions overcoming reason, vice was produced.

For our present purpose, the operations of mind, may be divided into three classes. First, those which are strictly intellectual, as, our apprehensions of truth

and falsehood, right and wrong, good and evil, our perceptions of existence and qualities, and the simple operations of the rational faculties, of judgment, imagination, memory, &c. These are not necessarily productive, either of feeling, or of volition. Second, Those which are associated with sense of duty, and accompanied with fixed purpose of conduct, which constitute virtues and vices. Third, Those accompanied with considerable feeling, and which are styled passions. These different operations may be blended together, and may pass into each other. It is, also, necessary to observe, that there is a great connexion between the mind and the body, so that many corporeal desires excite, directly or indirectly, different passions, and passions affect, more or less, the body.

The passions have, by some, been divided into animal, selfish, and social; or, by others, into benevolent and malevolent. In a moral view, some are, in their nature good, some bad, and others indifferent. Altogether, they constitute the greatest part of the moral life of man, for the intellectual speculations would be of no practical consequence if they had no influence on the desires and passions. It is of the utmost consequence to our present peace, and everlasting happiness, that these be so regulated as to correspond with the strictest rule of propriety, and with the perfection of our nature. Perfection, indeed, is not to be obtained in this life, but happy is he who strives most to acquire the command of his passions. A regulated state of the passions, implies an improved state of the intellectual powers. We have two classes of motives or incitements to moral action. The one comprehends the passions and desires belonging to man, as an animal; the other the rational faculty peculiar to him as an intellectual being. These are often at variance, and occasion a competition between the flesh and the spirit. There is no doctrine more

mistaken, nor more mischievous, than this—that what is natural, is innocent. Yet, under due regulation, our natural desires are all innocent, but, like irregularities of the mind, they may become the cause of evil. We are all naturally disposed to eat when hungry; but does it thence follow that it is proper, or allowable, to eat that which is not our own, and interfere with the rights of another, or to eat to gluttony.

With regard to the passions, the efforts of man have been directed, either to obtain a complete command over them all, and to repress their operation, or to eradicate one class, and cultivate another. The stoics, or philosophers of the porch, affected, after their master Zeno, to subdue the passions completely, and have them so under control, that they should neither feel pain nor pleasure, be devoid of pity to others, and happy themselves in the midst of tortures. The philosophers of the garden, or disciples of Epicurus, attended chiefly to pleasure and pain, seeking the one, and avoiding the other. We must not, however, be altogether misled by words, for the Epicurean philosophers placed true pleasure, not in sensual gratification, but in a prudent care of the body, and a steady government of the mind. What the two greatest schools of ancient philosophy could not accomplish, the religion of Jesus teaches to Christians. It does not profess to eradicate or destroy that which God hath given to man, but it instructs him how to regulate the gift to his advantage and tranquillity.

All operations of the mind, accompanied with much feeling, are more powerful than others, and more to be dreaded and suspected, as principles of action. Passion is, at the best, a doubtful guide; for even the worst passions, during their full influence, seem, to the deluded mind, to be reasonable and proper. They obscure the judgment, as effectually as intoxication; and it is not until they subside,

or be gratified, that the spell is dissolved, and a correct view of the conduct obtained. It is therefore a good and a safe rule, never to act merely from the impulse of passion, at least, when the action is to be to the detriment of others, or of ourselves. From the consequences of strong passions, and the uncertain moral results to which they lead, it is desirable to check every extravagant degree, even of those which are of a social and happy nature. It is, however, not merely useful, but an urgent duty, to encourage all those ideas, which give the mind an habitual tendency toward the benevolent affections, and promote the just operation of happy feelings. This is best done by dwelling on the doctrines of the gospel, which strongly inspire sentiments of humility, contentment, gratitude, love, hope, and joy. It is of importance to have a disposition of mind, to be more easily acted on by what is good, than what is bad. Disposition, is a state of mind, which renders it more susceptible of the operation of one set of causes than of another. It is sometimes constitutional, one man being more easily elated or depressed than another—more cheerful or melancholy—more disposed to be pleased or dissatisfied. But it is also very much under the power of culture, for the class of passions, and principles of action, we studiously or habitually indulge, must give to the mind a propensity to be more easily acted on by those, than by their contraries. Indulgence and repetition, diminish the influence of passive impressions on the mind, but strengthen our active principles. In proportion as we obey the sense of duty, the influence of vicious temptation is lessened. In proportion as we indulge the wicked and malevolent passions, their force is increased. The oftener we yield, the easier we yield; the more we resist, the better we fight. He who daily endeavours to be virtuous, acquires a virtuous

habit and disposition. He who daily indulges in anger, envy, and malice, becomes a passionate, an envious, and a malicious man. There is a distinction between virtues and virtuous feelings. Virtues originate in the understanding, for they are fixed purposes, to act according to a sense of duty and propriety. A man may perform these without passion; but if the excitement to actual performance be strong, there is feeling or passion, as we find in benevolence and charity. A man may be convinced of the duty of contentment, and may strive to acquire it, and repress, as far as possible, every discontented idea, every anxious wish for more, every action indicating it. He strives to learn with Paul, in whatever state he is, therein to be contented. At last he may feel fully contented, and cordially acquiesce, in the appointed mixture of good and evil he has received. He may acquire a contented disposition, and be a contented man. To procure a particular disposition, temper, or form of mind, is not alike easy to all, but is more or less difficult, according to the influence of early education, the prevalence of former habits, bodily constitution, and the operation of external circumstances. But, that it is in the power of every one, by attention and watchfulness, to cultivate and improve peculiar dispositions, is too evident to require proof. To the Christian the subject is peculiarly interesting, and the duty is plain. It is a part of the perfection to which he is called. He is not called to that which is impracticable, and he is not left, like the philosophers of old, or the irreligious of modern times, to his own unassisted endeavours, but is promised the aid of the Holy Spirit. But one thing he must carefully remember—that which he asks for, he must incessantly endeavour to obtain.

If any man inquire what passions ought to be, if

possible, eradicated, I reply, in general, those which immediately, or remotely, prove injurious to ourselves or others—all which by indulgence lead to misery—all which spring from vice—all which lead to actions not approved of by conscience. Reflection may readily point these out, and the decision is confirmed by scripture. Anger, hatred, malice, cruelty, envy, pride, discontentment, revenge, covetousness, lasciviousness, with the vices which may farther proceed from them, are to hold no place in the heart of him, who aims at christian perfection. The apostle says, “Walk in the Spirit, and fulfil not the lust of the flesh; for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other.” Then, having enumerated the works of the flesh, springing from the evil desires and passions, he solemnly warns the Galatians, that “they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God;” and reminds them, that “they who are Christ’s, have crucified the flesh with the passions and desires;” or, as our translation has it, “the affections and lusts.” No man then can be Christ’s, who suffers to live within him, far less who indulges, and habitually nourishes, these evil passions. They are to be crucified or destroyed, by repressing the first feeling of passion, by constant watchfulness, by earnest prayer for the influence of the Divine Spirit, and by frequent meditation on the grace of God, which “hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” By thus viewing the present state as fast passing away, and giving place to an everlasting habitation, our efforts are increased, and our hopes animated. We shall do well to view this life, and

all its passions and desires, as dead men would do, who have entered on that state which is to last for ever, and who are no longer influenced by vain, and unreasonable, and tormenting passions. Peter exhorts all to this duty, from this powerful motive:—"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." Let him who readeth the admonition, reflect on its importance and on its meaning, and without delay, endeavour, by the blessing of God, to conform unto it.

The advantage of regulating the passions and dispositions is so evident, that in all ages it has been a theme for the wise to expatiate on. A regard for temporal comfort, setting aside all considerations drawn from religion, ought to induce men to repress malice, envy, anger, peevishness, fretfulness, sullenness, discontent, covetousness, and all the rest of the black catalogue of vicious dispositions and passions, which imbitter life, and in proportion as they are indulged, cherish a thorn within the breast of mankind. It is impossible, on this subject, to speak too strongly, or, with sufficient earnestness, to entreat those who regard their happiness, and progress in Christianity, to check the very first feelings of envy, hatred, and other vices; and more particularly to watch against their indulgence, in the moment of solitary retirement, when the imagination gives additional force to the evil. It is not enough to guard against actions and expressions, resulting from feeling, but the mind itself is to be kept pure. We must not only avoid doing an injury, or committing a vicious act, but must, as far as possible, prevent the mind from imagining it, much more from dwelling on it. Alas! how seldom is this strict discipline maintained?—how seldom is it attempted? How few even intend, to preserve constantly this watch-

fulness over their thoughts, and to let the peace of God rule in their hearts?

The passions and affections to be cultivated, are those which promote our own happiness, and the good of others. As the evil feelings, are both passions and vices, so, those of a contrary nature, are both passions and virtues. But there are also passions which are either morally good or bad, according to the causes which excite them, as joy, sorrow, fear, and hope. In the encouragement of these, the motives must be considered. But there are passions, or affections, more decidedly good, in a moral view, as love, gratitude, benevolence, pity, contentment, humility, patience, resignation, and those other states of the mind which are either called virtues or passions, according to their strength, and the feeling which accompanies them. On this subject, we shall do well to consider the fruits of the Spirit, enumerated by Paul. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." He reminds the Ephesians, that they had walked according to the course of the world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, but exhorts them, now, "to walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith they were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love;" and it is said, "love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." To the Colossians he writes, "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering," "forgiving one another;" "and, above all those things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness, and let the peace of God rule in your hearts." If it become every one, to reflect on the importance of the advice, to eradicate the evil passions and desires, it is no less necessary, to seek after the fruit of

the Spirit. Let every man solemnly consider, that, if they alone are Christ's, who have crucified the affections and lusts, then, they only possess the Spirit, who bear the fruit; and what was said to the church of old, is still addressed to every individual, and undergoes no change, even until the end of time.

All the motives, which actuate a man, are so many desires. These, whether they originate from the animal or rational part of man, become, by their operation on the will, the causes of his actions. They constitute the prevailing disposition of the man, whether to virtue, or vice in general, or to individual virtues, and vices in particular. They stamp the moral character for integrity, industry, benevolence, malice, or deceit. They are the parents of our passions, as well as our actions, and arise either from the body, or from that state of the mind, called opinion, particularly in so far as that relates, to the qualities of good or bad, agreeable or disagreeable. They are excited, either by corporeal sensations, in which case, their indulgence is said to be productive of gratification, or, by the judgment we form respecting the effects to result from conduct; in which case, their indulgence is expected to produce happiness, though this expectation is seldom realized. Were we disposed to simplify the causes, it might be said, that love and dislike, are the primary passions, from which the rest spring; and these, in their most extensive signification, arise either from the animal or rational principle in man. We are actuated, by the desire of what appears to be good, that is, what gratifies the animal part, or pleases the rational part of man—by the desire of avoiding what is disagreeable to the animal part, or displeasing to the rational part. But the influence of objects, which administer to the sensual feelings, and the selfish principle is so great, that we are apt to consider that as an enjoyment, and a good

to be desired, which is really evil, and to shun that as an evil, which is truly good. It is therefore, of the utmost importance, to consider the real character of motives, and to determine, by reason and conscience, how far they ought to be allowed to operate, and whether, that which we wish to obtain, be truly good and desirable. Isaiah pronounced a wo unto them, "that call evil good, and good evil—that put darkness for light, and light for darkness." The origin of all our misfortunes, is this deceit, this false view of good and evil, which can only be corrected, and tranquillity obtained, by understanding the will of God, and listening to the voice of conscience. How truly does the prophet view the treachery of the heart, and the fruitless effect of instruction. "I knew that thou wouldst deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb.—O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments; then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." The prayer of David was, "Give me understanding and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart." He who knows not the true distinction, between good and evil, between what ought to be desired, and what ought to be avoided, can never regulate his passions, and cultivate dispositions, according to the rule of true wisdom. Happy is he who understands, and acts accordingly.

Before quitting this subject, I shall only farther observe, that, although, we can do much to subdue our passions, and therefore ought constantly to exert ourselves, to overcome the bad, and regulate the good, and, although, we may often voluntarily excite passion, yet, it is not always in our power to raise it. It is not reasonable to expect that a man shall, merely, by being desired, become joyful or grieved. Adequate means must be employed. These will operate, more

or less readily, according to his sensibility; but by reflecting on, and encouraging, those trains of thought or ideas, which give rise to particular feelings, he may indirectly excite the feeling. To do so, the mind must be, at the time, convinced that the cause is adequate, and must feel it to be so. There are three circumstances, necessary to the production of passion, and on the variation of which, the degree of feeling depends. These are, the sensibility of the mind, which is greater or less, according to constitution and culture; the strength or force of the cause, which, whatever its own nature may be, is considerably influenced by the frequency of repetition; and, lastly, the degree of attention, or direction of the mind, to the object, with as little interference as possible from other states of mind, and particularly from those which are of an opposite nature. It is a mistaken notion that he who has most sensibility, and is most frequently under the influence even of good passions, is the best and happiest man. As health of body consists in freedom from pain and infirmity, and not actually in corporeal enjoyment, so mental health, or permanent happiness, consists in tranquillity of mind, occasionally diversified, and refreshed by the agreeable passions. The religious life, consists more in steady faith, and uniform piety, than in strong feelings. Many, no doubt, have these so frequently, as to enjoy a portion of heaven while on earth, and all do, at times, partake of the blessing. But let no man suppose, that his religion is to be judged of, by his feelings or passions alone. These are exceedingly dangerous, when indulged without the control of reason. Many, it is to be feared, from sensibility of constitution, and erroneously connecting feelings, produced, perhaps, by very different causes, with facts related in scripture, deceive themselves with regard to their true disposition; or, the

same sensibility may make them feel strongly, when they think of the love of Jesus, or the joys of heaven, but these feelings do not arise from personal religion, neither are they connected with a uniform faith in the doctrines, and a conscientious practice of the duties, of Christianity. They cannot prove the person to be a Christian, though they may prove him to be an enthusiast. In thus urging against the abuse of the passions, and the possibility of a man determining that he is, or is not a Christian, by the degree of his sensibility, I am far, indeed, from speaking lightly of devotional feelings. They are heavenly cordials, but they are not given alike to all. They are, in great measure, withheld from some, who are even oppressed with heaviness, perhaps, for a time, with despondency. It were easy to say, that this depends on constitutional melancholy, or on a view of sin, without a proper view of a Saviour; but, though these may frequently be the immediate causes, yet still this is part of the providence of God respecting them, proper and necessary, in their particular case, to lead them to a cordial acceptance of a Redeemer, and, ultimately, to terminate in heavenly joy. Those who are exempted from this "heaviness, through manifold temptations," may, nevertheless, be denied the keen and ardent feelings of holy joy, which some possess. But they have no reason to be discouraged merely on that account; perhaps they are exempted from those fears and apprehensions, which sometimes may attack Christians, who have the most fervent devotional joy. Happy are they, if they possess that tranquillity and peace of mind, which, if it do not amount to joy or ecstasy, never falls to despondency. This happy, this desirable state is not to be confounded with careless insensibility, with mere apathy, but results from a steady reliance on Jesus. Whilst the Christian is conscious of his

sin, convinced of his unworthiness, he is also firm in his dependence, on Him who died for his sin, and whose righteousness is infinite. It is this tranquillity, this peace of mind, resulting from faith in a Redeemer, which is emphatically styled "the peace of God," that is, the peace communicated by God, and which Paul declared to pass all understanding. It was this inestimable gift, that he prayed the Thessalonians might receive, when he said, "Now, the Lord of peace, himself, give you peace always by all means." It was this gift that Jesus promised to his disciples—"Peace, I leave unto you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Devotional feeling, is, aptly called communion with God, and therefore, if he do not show himself to us, we cannot commune with him. But, though, this be a gift from God, yet, it is promised, that those who seek him shall find him. They must, however, seek him by the appointed means, and through Jesus. All joy, which is well-founded, must proceed from understanding, believing, and being satisfied with the work of Christ, and, from a persuasion, that he is the Redeemer of the individual, which persuasion is communicated by the Spirit. The prayer of Paul, for the primitive Christians, was exactly to this effect: "Now, the God of hope, fill you with all joy, and peace, in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." He prayed that they might, through these means, have both uniform tranquillity and devotional joy. Peter, speaks also of this joy, as arising from faith. Of Christ, he saith, "whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Faith, then, is the foundation of all joy;

but it must not be forgotten, that there may be faith, without joy, "full of glory." Many sincere Christians, have comfort and peace, but not joy. The degree of comfort, varies with the strength of faith, and the frame of mind. Comfort and consolation, proceed, by the power of the Spirit, from the expectation, and assurance, of ultimate deliverance from sin, and its consequences. They are founded on a persuasion, of the stability of the promises of God, and on a conviction, that we are willing, and determined to rely on these, and rest on Jesus, alone, for salvation. Joy, is a greater degree of this happiness, and proceeds from the hope of glory, which is founded on firm faith in Christ. Gratitude and love, are also powerful causes, producing religious joy and delight. They result from a clear and immediate view of the infinite mercy of God, and his grace to the individual. As they arise from the feeling of obligation, they will, making allowance for the different degrees of sensibility, be proportioned to the apprehension of the benefit, and the value set upon it. A good rule to judge by, is, to compare the feeling of the same individual, in temporal and spiritual affairs.

If we feel more joy at one time than another, from the contemplation of the same truths, it is because the mind is better fitted, at that time, for the production of that feeling. Such frames, or dispositions, are represented, like all other spiritual gifts, as the operation of the Spirit. But, like other acquisitions, this is to be sought, and promoted, by the appointed and natural means. It is to be asked by prayer, and encouraged by meditation, and the cultivation of personal religion. In particular, we are to reflect on, and endeavour to feel the power of, the world to come, to consider what we are by nature, what has been done for us, and to what undeserved hope we are raised. Deep meditation, on the mercy of God,

and the love of Christ, is the most likely mean to excite devotional delight. The mystery of redemption, is said by Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, to be the cause of their rejoicing, in the hope of glory. We are to encourage this happiness and tranquillity, by repressing sin, and cultivating personal holiness; "for the kingdom of God, is not meat and drink, but peace and joy in believing."

Faith, hope, and love, are three of the christian graces, which produce assurance, joy, and gratitude. These kindle the heart into praise, and fill the soul with heavenly feelings. They give some conception, of what the disciples felt, when they said, "Did not our heart burn within us, when he talked with us by the way?" There are other christian sentiments, capable of producing keen feelings, though not directly productive of joy or consolation. Amongst these, we reckon humility, self-reproach for sin, hatred to sin, patience, resignation, trust in God.

To conclude, we have experience of the difficulty of turning the mind, to particular points and pursuits, even in temporal employment, and in literary speculation. Every man knows, that however much he may be inclined, he cannot always, when he wishes it, turn his thoughts into the desired channel, or prosecute ideas with facility and advantage. He requires to prepare his mind, and sometimes even the best preparation fails. The same holds true, in some respects, with religion. We may, often, by meditation on the doctrines of the gospel, bring the mind, by the blessing of God, into a happy frame, for this is an appointed or natural mean. But, at other times, when the Spirit worketh not, our devotions are cold and languid, though amidst the oppression or indifference, the heart may truly say, "Lord, thou knowest all things—thou knowest that I love thee."

IV.

A fourth duty, and which, indeed, might be included in the preceding, is self-denial. The scriptures uniformly consider and represent this life as a pilgrimage, and the world as an enemy's country. The spirit of the world is diametrically opposite to the spirit of Christianity, and, therefore, the first demand made on the pilgrim is to renounce the world. This does not imply that he is to withdraw himself from the duties of life, from secular cares, from intercourse with mankind. They who hope to escape from evil, by abstracting themselves from the active pursuits of life, and devoting themselves to the retirement of the cloister, only exchange temptations of one kind for those of another. They are no more renouncing the world, than the merchant who is daily engaged in business. The apostolic injunction is, be not conformed to the world, renounce its earthly spirit, its temporal desires, its opposition to the spirit of the gospel. Look not so much for the enemy without as within. Expect to find its spirit in your own heart, following you wherever you go, in activity and in retirement, in the hours of business, and unhappily, even in the moments of devotion. Consider it as an evil genius perpetually haunting you, continually seducing the mind from heaven to earth, for ever tempting to prefer temporal enjoyment and sinful pleasure to the prospect of future happiness and the hope of glory. The duty of a Christian, then, is to form a right estimate of the spirit of this world, of the cares, occupations, and pleasures of life, compared to the spirit of Christianity, to a life of faith, and of conformity to the will of God. The spirit of the world embraces all the things of time, the pleasures of sense, carnal sloth, and the passions

of an unrenewed heart. The spirit of Christianity embraces the example of Christ. The first is natural, the second acquired. The first is the native growth of the soil, and requires to be rooted out. The second is to be planted in its place, and demands constant cultivation. Conformity to this world, is the worship of an idol, the love of a false god, even "the god of this world;" and it is just as reasonable to call a man a Christian who sets his affections on this world, and obeys its maxims, as to say that the votary of Juggernaut is a disciple of Christ. To have right notions of the tendency of this idolatry, is no less necessary than to have right notions of the service demanded by God; for the one is in direct opposition to the other. It was, therefore, a wise advice of one apostle, "mortify your members which are on earth;" and of another, "I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." Were these admonitions duly considered and obeyed, how different would mankind be, and how much should we advance in christian perfection? We should then overcome the world by faith, and be able with Paul to rejoice and glory in Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto us and we unto the world. The connexion is dissolved, we are now indeed strangers, attentive only to our pilgrimage. With the world and its spirit we have done. We look on present things, on present pleasures and pains, as fleeting fast away, and through Christ we lay hold on eternal life, and think not of the vanities around us. Alas! how short is the victory! How soon do these vanities enervate our exertions, these trifles divert our thoughts from heaven! We are excited, therefore, to constant diligence, to make our calling and election sure. We are called to differ in every temper and way of life from the world, to renounce its pleasures, to despise its maxims, to reject its

temptations, to rise above its cares and its evils, and to keep out of the vortex of its passions. We are called as strangers and pilgrims to view this world, as the dead now do who have quitted it for ever, and who no longer are interested in or beguiled with its vain and fleeting visions, and are no more mocked and deluded by its cares and pleasures, its phantoms and desires. We are called to live in constant watchfulness, in earnest prayer, in holy fear of contamination, in perpetual progress toward the heavenly city. We are called to deny ourselves all sinful or hazardous indulgence, to avoid tampering with temptations, to reject the desires of the flesh, and of the eyes, and the pride of life, to renounce the vanity of riches, to live in humility, to love our neighbour, to bless our enemies, to give up our heart and affections to God, to follow strictly the example of Christ, and to desire and strive to live on earth as we hope to do in heaven. Self-denial is not a temporary act, an occasional duty; it is part of the christian life itself; it must be perpetual in its operation, it must enter into every part of our conduct, into the thoughts and actions of every hour. But this is not an easy task. We are led to consider it as a warfare, and are exhorted to fight the good fight. No man is exempted from the battle. He can only avoid it by yielding himself a captive to the adversary, for he may depend on the assault being continued till the very end of the day. Now, if he choose to decline the combat, he enters the number of captives who are under the god of this world, and I do not at present address him. But if he lay claim to the character of a Christian, he must prefer suffering affliction with the people of God, rather than the enjoyment of the pleasures of sin for a season. It is, indeed, but for a season that any man can enjoy them. A season which is less than a moment, when compared to the duration of his ex-

istence. It was said of Judas Iscariot that it had been good for him he had never been born. But were the punishment of the wicked not eternal, were it certain that at the end of the longest period the imagination can conceive, he should be liberated from torment, and admitted into heaven, it would indeed have been good for him that he had been born; for a definite period of misery can bear no proportion to an eternal duration of happiness. Now, this being the case, it surely is the greatest of all follies to put the short span of life in competition with eternity, and to forfeit everlasting happiness for the sake of a season, a few months or years of sinful pleasure, or, to speak more correctly, of sinful conduct, for they who have drank deepest of the cup, can best tell whether it can indeed be called pleasure.

Self-denial, and separation from the principles of the world, are difficult in proportion to the power of the spirit of the world. He who is translated to heaven, and completely sanctified, would there feel the power of this world, and its love, and its maxims, and pursuits, as intolerable evils. He would shun its spirit, as that deadly foe which on earth had tried to bereave him of the blessedness he enjoys. Now, he who is animated with the hopes of heaven, and possesses that holy spirit which is to be found there, will, even on earth, avoid and dislike the principles and desires of worldly life, with a force and a feeling proportioned to the degree of his sanctification, or to the resemblance he has acquired to the heavenly state. In proportion as the heavenly spirit prevails, in the same proportion does the worldly spirit leave him. His conversation is already in heaven, and there may be, by the grace of God, a state on earth, so subdued, so sanctified, as to be rather the commencement of the blessedness of the celestial city, than the termination of a weary pil-

grimage through an enemy's country. There may be that happy, or holy condition, in which self-denial shall consist as much in still mingling with the world, as in shutting out its vanities, and renouncing its spirit. Yet, even in this state of high advancement by the work of the Holy Spirit, the soul is most humble, most alive to the remains of sin, most grieved by their presence, and, so far from entertaining pride, and vain confidence, is, at seasons, cast down with fears and apprehensions, only to be overcome by prayer, and faith in the perfect and effectual salvation of a Redeemer.

Man must renounce this world, if he hope to possess that which is to come. Our Redeemer, in his intercessory prayer for his followers, draws the distinction unequivocally. He separates them from the world, by a line which no man can pass. His expression is awful, it was uttered solemnly on earth, just before his sacrifice, and continues to be repeated in heaven. "I pray for them, I pray not for the world; they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Let no one deceive himself; he must belong either to Christ, or to the world, and he can be at no loss to determine his place, if he attend to a rule, which is simple, but strict. "His servants ye are whom ye obey. No man can serve two masters." The apostle Paul assures the Galatians, that Jesus "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world," that he might deliver us from its character and pursuits, from its sins and vanities, from its fate and destruction. He delivers his people from its dominion here, separates them from the men of the world, and, finally, by death, delivers them from all its trials and pains.

The duties of self-denial, of government of the passions and desires, of watchfulness, are so con-

nected with each other, and with renunciation of the world, that practically they cannot be separated. Nor can any man make much proficiency in these duties, who does not look to the Divine assistance, and anxiously implore the influence of the Spirit of Him who said, watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation. Self-denial is essential to the christian character. Jesus hath expressly declared, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." This injunction strikes at the heart itself; it does not merely embrace the outward conduct and actions of men, but the very thoughts, the affections, and principles of action. What is this great and fundamental duty of self-denial? What is it to take up the cross? Man is to be considered as captivated with the things of this life—his affections are earthly and sensual. He is prone to evil, and backward to that which is good. He loves the pleasure of sin, and prefers the gratification of the present moment to future happiness. Innumerable temptations assail him from without and within—there is a perpetual desire not merely to yield to those which present themselves, but even to go in quest of others, whilst to all good purposes, and virtuous actions, he is shamefully inactive and full of sloth. He has no objection to future happiness; on the contrary, he has an inefficient wish for it, but will not procure it at the expense of the present. Such is the natural state of man, and this state he is to deny. He is to renounce every sin, but especially those which most easily beset him. He is to guard against every thing which may operate as a temptation, or lead, even remotely, to a violation of duty. He is to fulfil every duty, and, especially, be watchful that he neglect not those to which he is the least disposed. There is no self-denial, no praise due, when he performs those duties

to which his natural disposition leads him, whether these may be benevolence or justice. Self-denial, on the contrary, is the victory of the Christian over his passions, his evil habits, his bad inclinations. It is a melancholy truth, that many are satisfied with a partial self-denial, choosing those duties for performance, which they, from habit or temperament, find most easy. They, so far from extending the principle to every part of life, to every operation of the mind, seem to consider that this partial and imperfect self-denial leaves them at liberty to indulge in every other respect.

We are not only to renounce every sin, and abstain from every thing unfavourable to our christian progress, we are not only to perform with fidelity every duty, but we are also to be active and vigilant in the government of our mind, and in the direction and employment of its powers. There is scarcely a greater enemy to improvement of every kind than sloth, or indolence of mind, which permits its faculties to sleep, and is ever apt to procrastinate exertion. It postpones examination, palsies the purposes of amendment, suspends vigilance against temptation, binds the will to the present moment, enters into league with every pleasure, repels every duty, and may truly be said to resemble the thorns, which choke the growth of the seed.

The first step to sin, is an imperfect and weak impression of the holiness of God, and of his majesty. A listless, cold acknowledgment of the purity and greatness of God, uniformly is productive of indifference with regard to sin. It is the deficiency of this knowledge and feeling of the awful holiness of Jehovah, which renders man so prone to sin, for his mind is indeed darkened, and he knows not God. The angels, and the spirits of the just, whilst they magnify and praise the whole attributes of God,

adore as the most essential of all, if such an expression may be used, his infinite purity, and cease not day or night to cry, Holy, holy, holy. The contemplation of the infinite holiness of God seems to employ all the powers and faculties of a pure spirit in heaven; and can we suppose that had Adam, in the garden of Eden, beheld and felt as he afterwards did, in the paradise of Jesus, the holiness of God, in all its majestic infinitude, he would so easily have yielded to sin, and thereby defied the essential attribute of God? What must be the feeling of the redeemed soul, on entering into the presence of holiness, infinite and essential holiness! It must indeed be a heavenly feeling, to experience the glowing gratitude, the humble yet fervent love, the ecstatic joy, which the ransomed and sanctified sinner does, on beholding, and truly knowing, for the first time, the purity of God, and the richness of that mercy which saved him from the condemnation of a world lying in wickedness. But, alas! there is perhaps another spirit, who, at the same moment, left this land of ignorance, and who now, with far different feelings, has an equal knowledge of the holiness of Jehovah. It would require the power of an inspired tongue to tell, and the capacity of a disembodied spirit to understand, the horror of a guilty soul snatched, perhaps suddenly, away from a life of levity, and regardlessness of God; possibly from a body struck down in the active pursuit of sin, and now, in one moment, made to behold and comprehend, and be indeed filled with the agonizing knowledge, of the holiness of God. The accursed spirits who had so long blinded and deceived him, and who hurry this wretched soul to the abodes of darkness and everlasting misery, now appear, in all the hideous and dreadful reality of impurity, contrasted with holiness: and the deluded soul, abandoned and renounced by the God he had neglected,

and tormented by the spirits he detests, but by whom he is held in bondage, laments amidst blasphemies and never-ending remorse, that in the day of grace and of mercy, he would not believe that the Lord God, his judge, was in very deed a holy God and true, when he declared that the soul which sinneth shall die. Who amongst those who yet remain in the land of hope, and who, with many and fervent prayers, endeavour to behold clearly, and feel powerfully, the holiness of God, can indulge in sin, which is hateful to him, or daringly affront the Divine Majesty by willingly doing what must provoke his anger? This were, indeed, acting towards God as a man durst not do to his fellow mortal. It ought then to be the studious effort of every one, to keep deeply impressed on his mind, a sense of the glory and holiness of God, to consider what is required by God, what is displeasing to him, and that not the most secret thought, or desire of the heart, is unobserved or unremembered by him. Every Christian feels and laments that he is too much disposed to possess the ultimate advantages of religion, without its present restraints, and that he is reluctant to give up his evil thoughts, and careless habits, for a future good. He is persuaded of the reality of the doctrines of Christianity, and conscious that he ought to obey its laws, and trust to its promises. But he feels that, too often, he only assents with the judgment, whilst he controls not the affections. Indolence, the desire of present gratification, the power of temporal objects, the natural disposition of the heart to vain and sinful thoughts on the one hand; and on the other, imperfect knowledge of the glory of God, want of love to him, and weakness of faith, contribute to make him still do those things which he disapproves of, and convince him that he is an unprofitable servant. There must, then, be a continual watchfulness, a con-

stant endeavour to promote the good, and repress the bad. The desires and thoughts may be compared to a bird, always ready to fly away. The instant that vigilance is relaxed, they wander after sin and vanity. The more they are neglected the farther do they stray, and the oftener they wander, the more easily do they break loose, until the mind at length be sensible of no control, and the soul which once trembled at sin, now commits it with apathy. Would any Christian be informed why he commits sin, the answer is, because he forgets to watch and pray against it. He lets down his ideas of the holiness of God, and his fierce anger against iniquity. He is less sensible than formerly of danger; his faith in Jesus is less active; his love is colder; he yields to indolence, and the allurements of temptation, to omit a duty or transgress a law. Perhaps that most dangerous and deceitful state prevails, in which he sinks into sloth, or even violates an express commandment, more readily from the hope of forgiveness through Christ, trusting, supinely, to the sacrifice of Jesus, without considering sufficiently, that they who are to be delivered from the punishment of sin, are also delivered from its power.

The necessity of activity is urgent. The cry for the Spirit ought to be earnest. The constant prayer ought to be for an increase of the faith which overcometh the world. The Christian, though sanctified by the Holy Ghost, is not yet sanctified "wholly, soul and body." There is still a law within him, warring against his spirit. The cares, pursuits, pleasures, and pains of this world, have still a powerful influence. His heart and affections are still too much set on the present moment. His love to God is opposed by love of the world. His desire of heaven is weakened by his ties to earth. His views of eternity darkened by those of time. His christian graces

counteracted by antichristian passions and dispositions, humility by pride, charity by envy and hatred, benevolence by selfishness, hope by indifference, faith by distrust, love by malice or dislike, gentleness by anger, resignation by discontent, the hope of glory by the desire of pleasure, the enjoyment of God by the vanities and frivolities of life.

V.

A fifth duty connected with and essential to the two last, is a careful regulation of the train of thought, particularly with a view to acquire good habits. Habit is an original principle in the mind, which must always operate. The mind is like a garden, which, if it be not stocked with goodly plants and flowers, must be overrun with useless or noxious weeds. When the thoughts are left to wander at discretion, we find that they often follow each other without any particular connexion, and at last end in some remote point, either by that point being often resorted to, or by something having more accidentally determined to it. In other instances, we find that ideas become so associated, that when one is excited, another particular one almost invariably follows it. This happens in consequence of our strongly or repeatedly connecting one idea with another. Some have referred the association of ideas to habit, whilst others reverse the matter, and refer habit to association. It is of no practical importance to determine the question, but it is of the greatest consequence to remember the existence of the principle, and to endeavour by a careful command over the mind, by early and constant vigilance, to acquire such a train of thinking, as leads from vain imagination, from vicious objects, or sinful sentiments, the useful reflection, to virtuous principles or christian graces. It is of the

highest importance to check sinful thoughts, to abstain from unholy desires, to extinguish the first spark of vicious passion, or the salies of an ungoverned imagination; whilst, on the other hand, we encourage whatever tends to invigorate the intellectual powers, and hallow the heart, or amend the conduct. For it is an invariable rule, that whatever we allow ourselves to think frequently or deeply upon, will return often and spontaneously. The mind becomes gloomy or cheerful, envious or benevolent, devout or sensual, fitted for study or incapable of reflection, according to the regulation of the thoughts. It is impossible to tell to what contemptible imbecility, to what vicious frame of mind, an undisciplined state of the thoughts may lead; nor, on the other hand, to what degree the understanding and the heart may, through the blessing of God, be improved, by constant diligence, and watching over the process of thinking. Besides having this in view, we must be careful to obtain correct or true associations, that is, to associate ideas which naturally ought to be connected, and to attach uniformly to, or connect with each idea its true quality. How often do thoughtless men connect ideas or conduct, not with their true and vicious qualities, but solely with the ideas of spirit, of pleasure, or of some virtue? The duty I have recommended, enables a man, by the blessing of God, to judge correctly, to keep his mind pure, and to have his conversation in heaven.

I cannot quit this subject, without pointing out to parents and guardians, the incalculable importance of regulating this principle in childhood, endeavouring to produce associations which are true and beneficial; and also, as far as possible, by books of instruction and conversation, to encourage such trains of thought, as shall improve the mind, and purify the heart.

VI.

Meditation may be considered as a branch of this duty, or as implied under it. But it is so far different, that it is a voluntary direction of the mind, to some specific subject, for the purpose of understanding it better, or procuring, through it, greater improvement of the heart. Meditation, however, is different from investigation, though the two processes are often conjoined. Investigation in morals, is the search after truth and knowledge. Meditation, is reflection on the qualities of the principles discovered, and deductions of moral excellence from moral truths. Hence, it is a powerful mean of producing devotional feeling. Investigation, meditation, and devotion, are frequently conjoined; and, indeed, in a pious mind the two last are rarely separated from the first.

Meditation implies previous knowledge, and the improvement of it to a useful purpose. He who meditates on the love of Christ, must know what Christ hath done for him; and he who knows the doctrine of redemption, and frequently thinks upon it, naturally has active desires respecting it. No man expects to improve in science or any branch of knowledge, who does not frequently think on the object of his study, and consider all its relations and qualities. The more intensely he thinks, and the oftener he directs his attention to it, the fonder does he become of it, and the greater proficiency does he make. In this way, mathematics, the philosophy of the mind, chemistry, astronomy, are acquired, improved and relished. Now, although redemption be the gift of God, and illumination the work of his Spirit, yet, we are every where taught, that the mind must

exert its powers, and are called to strive for greater perfection.

Meditation is one of the appointed means for obtaining this. The habitual train of thought, which we encourage, must have a powerful influence on the heart and conduct. Every repeated operation of the mind, every renewed emotion or passion, tends to strengthen a particular habit. On this principle, it is, that the dispositions of mankind so generally vary, according to the circumstances under which they are placed, and that tempers come to be established. Mental, like corporeal, operations, are much under the power of habit; and the oftener that the attention is directed to a particular object, the better it is understood and relished. It is as vain to say that a man may be a good Christian, who seldom thinks of religion, as that a man may become a good mathematician, who never studies propositions. We are not to expect a miracle, that the power of God will be exerted, to inform the understandings and elevate the desires, of those who continue careless and slothful, and who think but little of the doctrines of the gospel. It is absurd to expect this, and it could not take place, without, from that moment, making them no longer careless and indifferent. We are, therefore, safe in judging of ourselves, for, with others, we have nothing to do, by this rule, that if we seldom think of God, and the riches of his mercy, if we seldom meditate on the love of Christ, if we have no pleasure in thinking of all his wondrous works, and of these, the greatest to us is redemption, in studying how we may serve him better, in trying to love him more, in endeavouring to abstract our thoughts from earth, and have our conversation in heaven, we have indeed, too certain grounds to fear, that we are yet far from the land of safety.

Meditation implies not only communion with God,

but also with our own hearts, or self-examination. Who that meditates on the law of God, can do it, abstractedly, without applying it to himself, and examining his conformity or his failure? Who that thinks of the redemption through Christ, and the joys of heaven, does so, without asking his heart if this redemption, and these joys, be for him? The apostle who says, "meditate on these things," says also, "examine yourselves."

Meditation improves our knowledge and promotes habitual piety. It is productive of a devotional spirit, of self-examination, of self-denial, and of particular virtues, according to the concurrence of circumstances at the time. Nor, are we ever to forget, that in our meditations we approach nearer to God, and are more immediately under the influence of his Spirit, who enlightens the understanding, and directs the heart and thought.

David, who is styled the man after God's own heart, was frequent in his meditation. His earnest desire was to know the precepts of God, and to meditate on his law. In his description of a good man, he expressly says, "His delight is in the law of God, and in his law doth he meditate, day and night." This was his own practice, as we learn from the hundred and nineteenth Psalm, one of peculiar excellence: "Mine eyes prevent the night-watches, that I might meditate on thy word." Did we meditate half so much on the statutes of God, as we do on the dreams and vanities of this world, how different would be our progress in religion, and how much greater our happiness? Where the treasure is, there the heart will be also.

Language, which is only expressive of ideas, may be the same, under very different degrees of impression. "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain," are the words of the heavenly anthem. This language

of heaven may be uttered on earth, this hymn of the redeemed may be sung by those who are only on their way to the city of its King. But the knowledge, which, in that glorious place, calls forth the ascription of praise, the comprehension of the height, and the depth of the love of the Saviour, the warm, ecstatic feeling, which is there enjoyed, cannot be conceived here. There are limits, and narrow, indeed, they are to the powers of the soul on earth ; but one star differeth not more from another in glory, than one soul does from another in its power, and in its triumph over the earth, and in its approach to the feelings and the joys of heaven ; and it seems established, that the more earnest the attempt, and the more deep, and constant the meditation, the more does the soul, by the grace of God, not only obtain a victory over the principles of the world, but the higher is it permitted to soar, above its former powers, and the more does it know, not only of the language of heaven, but of that joy, and of those perceptions and feelings, of which it is expressive, and of the gratitude, and love, and adoration, which shall penetrate the spirit above, in contemplating this truth, that God so loved the world, as to give his own Son, for the redemption of the humble, who will come unto him.

Love to Christ, is the point to which all our thoughts must tend. All meditation productive of joy and consolation, whatever its subject may be, has a reference to our love of Jesus. Whether the sentiment be that of gratitude or humility, of resignation or hope, whether the subject be, the propitiation of a Redeemer, the promise of the Spirit, the hope of glory, the dissolution of our body, or our entrance into the glorious assembly of saints above, and a reunion with departed friends, still, however the subject vary, wherever the thought be

directed, the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, and intermixes with every thought, and predominates over all. Or rather it is the source, whence all good proceeds, and without which no joy could be felt.

Meditation on the love of God to us, must comprehend the astonishing display of mercy, in the sacrifice of Christ for us, and cannot fail to suggest to our minds, the cause of this sacrifice, and our personal connexion with it.

Meditation on the evil of sin, the hatred of God to it, its predominance in our nature, our proneness to it, our inability to escape from its dominion and its consequences, otherwise, than by the grace of God, produces, on the one hand, humility, on the other, gratitude to God. Humility and self-abasement, with a true sense of our guilt, and of our incapacity to save ourselves, may produce keen feeling, but cannot directly produce joy; yet, these are the springs, whence joy, and every christian grace, proceed, for the gratitude which they inspire, is productive of praise, and "joy unspeakable." What shall I render to the Lord? is the grateful exclamation which bursts forth. Wherever the sense of guilt, or humility, is keen, and the soul has faith in Christ, the keenness of the sense of guilt, produces a corresponding keenness in the feeling of gratitude. There is no holy joy, more to be desired and regarded, than that, which proceeds from a strong feeling of our own necessity, for, to whom much is forgiven, the same must love much.

Meditation on the strictness of the law of God, and our obligation to obedience, must make us sensible of our sin, thankful for a Saviour, and anxious to have every thought and action, brought into subjection to the law of God.

Meditation on the promise of the Spirit, gives us

good hope of present grace, of constant perseverance, and of final triumph.

Meditation on the good providence of God, confirms and invigorates our trust, our patience, our gratitude, and love.

Meditation on our own decease, and on the world to come, tends to raise the mind far above this life; and, whilst we anticipate the time, when our heart and our flesh shall faint and fail, we are comforted with the promise of support, and, through Christ, rejoice in the hope of glory. The prospect of meeting with our dear friends, who have gone before us, pours a rich balm of consolation into the afflicted spirit, and, naturally, increases our diligence, to be followers of those, who, through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises.

Finally, the various reflections which embrace the articles of our belief, the perfections of God, and extensive history of redemption, confirm and increase our faith, and promote peace and joy in believing.

I need enforce no farther the performance of this duty, in favour of which, it would, indeed, be difficult to say too much. When we consider its importance, under the blessing of God, in making us acquainted with ourselves, in improving our christian knowledge, in promoting our personal religion, and habitual piety, and in making us experience the consolations of the gospel, there can be no room for farther recommendation, of resorting to this appointed mean, of invigorating our christian life, not only at stated times, but, also, at every occasional opportunity, during our waking hours.

“Whatsoever things are true,” says Paul, “whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, *think* on these

things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in us, *do*, and the God of peace shall be with you."

VII.

The next duty which I notice, is to obtain a correct knowledge of our own state, and a true opinion of ourselves.

The duty of self-examination, is strongly enjoined by the apostle, and its utility is evident. In two passages, in particular, we are admonished to examine ourselves; in the one, that we may know that we are Christians, and not reprobates; in the other, that we may not partake of a holy ordinance unworthily. The object of self-examination, is, to know wherein we are deficient, with an intention of improvement. No man can improve who does not know his faults. It is not a hasty, and superficial examination, which is sufficient, but a minute inquiry into our thoughts, desires, habits, and conduct—into our knowledge of the will of God, and of the doctrine of redemption—into our faith, love, obedience, and conformity to the law of God, and example of Christ. This ought to be a frequent employment, and, more especially, it ought to be the business of every night, to inquire how far we have gone astray, or what progress we have made in the great design of life. This is to be done, that we may make particular confession of our sins, and pray for grace to enable us to form, and adhere to, the good resolutions of greater vigilance and of reformation. There must be daily repentance, that is, daily, indeed hourly, sorrow for sin, with active efforts to reform. There is a repentance, necessary to our entering into the number of disciples, and beginning the christian course; but there is, besides this, a constant repentance, requisite after-

wards, for, he who says he hath no sin, deceiveth himself, and he who admits that he does sin, must also admit the necessity of contrition, and of resolutions to watch against it in future. Now, this repentance cannot be obtained without examination. A mere confession that we are sinners, and a general expression of sorrow for this state, with vague intentions to reform, are not effectual means of improvement. We are, indeed, to hate sin in general, but we are also to hate particular sins in ourselves, for, our nature is not only sinful in its quality, but this quality is manifested by individual actual transgressions, which are to be repented of, and avoided. Now, examination is of no use, if it did not lead to this. It is of no advantage to discover that the garden is full of weeds, if these be not pulled out.

There are many points for inquiry; particularly, whether we have had the love of God ruling in our hearts, maintained firm and constant faith in Jesus, and possessed a steady wish to be released from the tyranny of sin; whether we have been, in all things, resigned to the will of God, relying on his providence; whether we have been careful in reading and studying his holy word, earnest in our prayers for the aid of the Spirit, diligent in the observation of every ordinance, and in obeying every special command; whether we have indulged vain thoughts, or evil passions; whether we have done all the good we could to others, and anxiously avoided doing, or wishing, them any harm; whether we have maintained a constant watch over our heart and desires, improved our time to the glory of God, been diligent in our temporal concerns, and endeavoured to conduct them faithfully, and to the service of God; in a few words, whether we know, and adorn the doctrine of God in all things, and feel the love of Christ, constraining us, to the performance of every duty, to

ourselves, to our neighbours, and to our God. Were the examination made daily and minutely, as if we were about to answer for the conduct of the day, in the presence of God, as we must at last do, how different would be our life. The obstacles to this, proceed from sloth and a dislike to the employment; from a conviction that our conduct cannot bear the examination; and, most assuredly, too often from an intention not to reform, so completely, and minutely, as this investigation would require. Does not this proceed from a delusion, from inadequate notions of the purity of God, and the requisition of his law? Jesus came not to destroy, but to confirm the moral law; not to absolve us from its performance, but to enable us to observe it. It proceeds from our not thinking so highly as we ought of the importance of fulfilling the end for which we were created, and as we shall think, when we have the near prospect of judgment. At the approach of death, these things appear in their true value, and we deeply deplore our loss of time, and want of conformity to the will of God. But it is quite evident that the change in our situation cannot alter the nature of obligations, or of our actual condition, and that it is an inevitable conclusion, either that we, when about to enter into the presence of a God, infinite in holiness, think too purely, too holily, of the strictness of his law, or that now we think too vaguely, and quite unjustifiably, of his holy requisitions.

Now, this examination, if conducted rigidly, must, whilst it animates us to activity, convince us of the utter impossibility of being saved by our own righteousness and obedience, and must make us, daily, more thankful for a Redeemer. It must make us, with greater earnestness and cordiality, flee to that fountain which is opened for sin and pollution, and

trust to that righteousness which is infinite, and accepted by God. At the same time, it relaxes not our efforts, and we feel, that deep views of our own absolute inability, and of the grace of God, in pardoning us for the sake of Jesus, constrain us, doubtless, by the working of the Spirit, to hate sin, and to endeavour to be conformed to the example of our Saviour, of Him who said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

One important effect of this examination, is, to communicate a true opinion of ourselves, in other words, to inspire humility. Humility, does not consist, in thinking worse of our ourselves, than we deserve, but in thinking justly. We may believe, and believe justly, that our depravity is such, that were we exposed to temptation, and not restrained by the grace of God, we might commit every crime. But there is no humility, but rather insanity, in believing that we are guilty of a crime we have not committed. There is no humility, but want of reason, in a man confessing that he has committed murder or robbery, or has spoken falsely, or is a swearer, or a drunkard, if he have not been guilty of these crimes. The best definition of humility is given by an apostle, and it is, not to think of ourselves, above what we ought to think, and this will be low indeed. For, although, we may not have committed particular crimes, although we be not guilty of every sin, we are yet guilty of so many, and are so truly sinful, that we ought to cry out, unclean, unclean, God be merciful to us sinners. There is no Christianity without humility, which is the foundation of all improvement, and the soil, in which faith in Christ, is planted. Humility, and a conviction of the truth, with regard to the state of the man, are synonymous terms; and he who is not humble deceiveth himself, and is not yet acquainted

with the truth. All the opinions and sentiments, peculiar to this world, must be eradicated, and our nature, itself, changed, before we become humble. Nor is there any greater sign of spiritual pride, the worst species of the vice, than to suppose that we are sufficiently humble. A man can no more be humble enough, than he can be good enough; and there is no doubt, that in proportion as we think we attain christian perfection, we decrease in humility, and advance in pride. The moment a man ceases to be humble, he ceases to be safe. There are many reasons for humility. We are unable to do any good thing as of ourselves, and are indebted for every thing to the grace of God. Our sins called for the death of Christ, and yet we do not, sufficiently, hate that which made so great a sacrifice necessary, nor, are we thankful and grateful, enough, for the gift. We do not employ our powers and faculties and opportunities given by God, to his glory and our own improvement, but pervert them to the torment and misery of ourselves and others. Our passions are excited, sometimes even to madness, by causes too contemptible, to be thought of the very next hour, perhaps the next minute. We are, perpetually, in pursuit of vanities and trifles, and change the object as often as we rise, but never for the better. We are engrossed with a mere trifle, and endanger our salvation, for a thing, which, in a short time, we wonder how we could desire. The want of humility, is a cause of innumerable quarrels and resentments, is of incalculable mischief in society, and is the greatest bar to personal improvement. No man can be expected to improve, till he be sensible that he need to do so. Who strives to improve in any science or art, till he be convinced that he is deficient in knowledge or dexterity? Who prays for increase of faith, till he feel that he have little faith? Who

strives to imitate Jesus, till he be sensible that he is not conformed to his example? Jesus said, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly." No man who is proud, haughty, and puffed up with a conceit of his own progress, has been taught of Jesus. The command, "learn of me," is as binding as "thou shalt not kill;" and if a murderer be not a Christian, neither is he who is high-minded. There may be a difference between the two sins, in their consequence to society, and in their degree of guilt, for all sins are not equally heinous, but both are utterly and essentially incompatible with godliness.

Self-examination may also be a mean of comfort and encouragement to the desponding. Those who are most deeply impressed with the holiness of God, with the evil of sin, and with their own guilt, and inability to save themselves, are often, particularly when the mind is weakened by infirmity of body or other causes, apt to write bitter things against themselves. They doubt if they have ever believed in Christ, or have any true interest in his redemption. They fear that all their former professions and hopes, have been delusive, and, that they have neither part nor lot in the heavenly inheritance. Now, to such mourning souls I would say, that examination is a most useful remedy, if accompanied by prayer, and attention to the state of their hearts. They feel that they are indeed sinners, lost and guilty in the sight of God, that their love is cold, their obedience forced, their faith weak, and they complain that the spirit of the world, in all its deformity, and all its deceitfulness, dwells within them. Now, such souls have much need of examination; and, if they do carefully examine into their hearts, they may find, that much of their discomfort arises from taking a view of the evil, without looking at the remedy. They behold the vileness of their own heart, the greatness of their sin,

the coldness of their love to God, their utter helplessness and destitute condition. But let them look, not only at these views, which are, indeed, just, but also at the rich and true promises of Christ, and then let them examine into what evidence they have, that they do not belong to those who may hope to be saved. I would ask them one question. Do they feel inclined to abandon the cause of Christ, and go back to the world? Do they entertain no love to Christ, and no desire to adhere to him? They dare not answer these questions in truth, without admitting, that it would be the last desire of their heart, that Christ should depart from them, or, that they should renounce him, and deliberately return to the world. They say their love is cold, but they dare not say, they desire not to love Christ. They fear they have no real faith, but they dare not say, that they believe Christ cannot save them. They say they have no right to trust in Christ for deliverance, but they dare not say, that they desire to trust in any thing else but his work. They dare not say, that they are disposed to abandon the little hope they have, and willing to yield at once to despair. They dare not say, that they feel sin to be no evil, or, a light thing. They do feel, and must admit that they feel, sin to be a burden, and the cross the only remedy. But they revert to the lamentation, that they cannot apply that remedy to their own case. True, but the Spirit of God can; and they have no ground to fear, that, if they continue in prayer, their application shall be made in vain. They are sorry, but who is sorry enough, for sin? They believe that nothing but the work of Christ can save them, and are willing, if they could, to throw all their hope, and all their expectation, on Him. I say to such souls, without fear of saying too much, or more than is warranted, that they are under a delusion, and that this examina-

tion should give them good hope. Satan troubles not his own, with doubts and fears, but is often permitted, in order to try, and increase the faith of God's own people, to harass them with many apprehensions, and one of his devices is, to place a screen before the cross, and hold up to the trembling soul, the full display of all its sins, and endeavour to make its case appear hopeless. But, by continuing in prayer, by examination, not only into the catalogue of evils, but also into the better desires and humble wishes of the soul, and by putting the question of our Lord, "Lovest thou me?" and answering, without qualification of the actual degree, simply yes or no, there may, and there shall, come a day of deliverance. The screen, which Satan had placed before the cross, shall fall down, and the fulness and the adequacy of the remedy shall be discerned, as clearly, and as keenly, as the magnitude of the evil. That truth, which had, often, before, been urged as a source of comfort, but urged in vain, namely, that Christ died to save even the chief of sinners, now comes with force and with efficacy to the mind. The infinite love, the inconceivable mercy, the earnest desire of Jesus to save sinners is now felt, and proves a source of joy and consolation, to which the soul had long been a stranger. Self-examination, then, ought not to be confined to the discovery of sins, or the display of guilt, but ought to extend to the inquiry, how far the soul is willing to be saved by Christ, and to rely on him for salvation, and such inquiry ought to be accompanied by fervent prayer, that the Spirit of God, would be pleased to bestow the joy of salvation. It is both to be feared and lamented, that many produce, and increase their distress, by involving themselves in abstruse speculations, and inquiries into points of theology beyond their understanding to comprehend, instead of confining themselves to

the direct and explicit answer, to the essential question, "What shall I do to be saved?" And, before dismissing this subject, I cannot refrain from cautioning against that busy spirit, which leads some, to unsettle the mind of others, by introducing the discussion of subjects, beyond the capacity of far wiser people to explain, instead of confining themselves, with christian humility, to that which ought to be uppermost in the heart, the free grace and infinite love of a kind and compassionate Saviour, who desireth that all should come unto him and be saved.

VIII.

Another important duty, is the careful cultivation of personal religion. This consists in the strict performance of all our duties from religious motives, the repression of evil thoughts, and the encouragement of those affections, which result from just views of our relation to God, through a Redeemer. The preceding, and subsequent, part of this work, is intended to produce personal holiness, by enforcing its necessity, explaining the parts of which it consists, the motives to it, and the means which promote it. The necessity of cultivating personal religion, is evident from this, that nothing can belong to us which we do not possess. No moral conduct, no disposition, can be attributed to us, which we do not desire, encourage, and possess. We may be persuaded of the benefit of cleanliness, but this is of no consequence, if we do not attend to personal cleanliness. David inquires, "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" The answer is, "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart." Isaiah admonishes his readers to this personal purity, "Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of

your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil, learn to do well." In another part he prophesies, "It shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem shall be called holy, even, every one, that is written among the living, in Jerusalem." This corresponds exactly with the answer to David's question. Paul exhorts the Ephesians to "walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, increasing in the knowledge of God ;" and again, "walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith ye are called." He prayed for the Philippians, that they might "be sincere and without offence, till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." That is, that they might be practically and personally holy, abounding in good works, which, though no ground of our acceptance, are to the glory of God through Christ, inasmuch as through Him, they are the fruits of righteousness, in those who were formerly barren. We were created to glorify God, and to devote every moment to his service. In our depraved state, we cannot do this, and are altogether unholy. But the command is not abrogated, nor the purpose, for which we were created, altered. By union with Christ, and sanctification of the Spirit, we are again enabled to live to the glory of God, and our restitution to the performance, through Jesus, of that which redounds to the glory of God, must be to his praise, inasmuch as we, from being barren, are made fruitful. Good works are not the ground of our safety, but the fruit of faith. We were, originally, created to good works, on a covenant of works, which we did not keep. We are created, anew, in Jesus Christ, to good works, on a covenant of grace indeed, but still, personal holiness, is as much required as ever, and is a necessary effect,

and, therefore, an indispensable evidence of the presence of that Spirit, without whom no man can be saved, for Jesus died to procure the Holy Spirit to his disciples. Soul and body must be devoted to God, and though we do fail, and come far short of perfection, yet, we are not authorised to stop short. In proportion to our progress, shall be our reward. We are accepted and saved by grace, on account of what was done in our behalf by Christ, but it is evident from scripture, that the degree of happiness to be enjoyed, shall be proportionate to our faith in Christ, and to our conformity to his example.

Paul desires Titus to exhort a particular class of men, to perform their peculiar duties, that they might adorn the doctrine of God, our Saviour, in all things; for the grace of God, adds he, teacheth men, diligently, to abstain from ungodliness, and to live righteously, looking for "the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify, unto himself, a peculiar people zealous of good works." Now, this address contains two positions; first, that Christ gave himself for us as a sacrifice, or the doctrine of the atonement; second, that an express end of that, was to redeem us, not merely from the punishment of sin, for that is implied in the first, but, also, from its love and influence, that the heart might be purified and made holy by the Divine Spirit; and, that as a people, distinct from the world, we might be, not only inclined to good works, but zealous of them, studious, night and day, to live not unto ourselves, but unto God, not unto this world, but in expectation of, and preparation for, the next.

Every man who attends to his own mind, must be convinced, that he has a strong tendency, not only

to the transgression of special commandments, but also a constant propensity towards indifference or coldness of affection to God. This state of apathy, as it may be called, is no less criminal, than a violation of other duties, which makes a greater impression on the mind, and, indeed, it is the avenue to all other sins. A dread of sin, and a desire to draw near to God, are best obtained, and kept up, by a correct knowledge of the character of God, the requisition of his law, the nature of his mercy, through Christ, and a view of ourselves. From these contemplations, there must always result a feeling or effect, more or less powerful, according to the impression made, and it is our object to increase this feeling, as far as our nature will admit of. The result of the whole, must be a holy faith in Jesus, and a reliance on Him, who, alone, can save us from the fate we so evidently deserve. This faith is, truly, said to overcome the world, and exalt the soul to heaven. Being founded on knowledge, and embracing every part of the gospel, it must be productive of dread of offending God, from a conviction of his holiness and power; of love to God, and a desire to please him, from a lively persuasion of what he hath done for us; of a renunciation of the spirit of the world, from a clear view of its opposition to the spirit of Christ, and from an expectation of a better life; of an active and constant effort to avoid sin, and employ the thoughts and whole faculties of the mind, in the service of God, from a principle of love and gratitude; of the hope of salvation, and preparation for heaven, from a belief of the power and faithfulness of Jesus.

Personal religion, comprehends a dedication of ourselves to the service of God, the encouragement of christian graces, constant vigilance against the influence of temptation, and for the performance of duty, with an active application, of doctrines and

belief, to life and sentiment. It is encouraged by serious reflection on the law of God, and on our obligation to observe it, in every part, and in a perfect manner, on what hath been done to atone for our sin, and to renew us to good works. It is farther promoted, by strenuous and faithful endeavours to obey; by constant and earnest prayer for the aid of the Spirit, and for increase of faith; by the encouragement of pious sentiments; by the various considerations to love and serve God; and by looking to the joy which is set before us. If any more minute directions be required, I refer, for particular rules, to the ten commandments, which are special and positive laws, which no man is at liberty to transgress, and to our Lord's discourse, contained in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters, of the gospel of St Matthew, which I recommend to the serious, and very frequent, perusal of my readers, but which I need not transcribe.

I conclude these remarks, by advising, as two useful means of promoting personal holiness, temperance and vigilance.

Temperance has, by some philosophers, been defined to be the mean between extremes, and it is not to be confined, merely, to the rule of eating or drinking, or bodily gratification; but is to be extended to the mind, particularly, with a view to the repression of strong and hurtful passions. The apostle's advice is, "Let your moderation be known to all men. Be sober."

Vigilance is essential in an enemy's country, especially when there is an active traitor in the heart. We are ordered to watch, not under temptation, but against it. We are to avoid, rather than resist; for some can flee who cannot fight. We are to maintain a guard upon our thoughts and desires, fixing them steadily and actively on what is good, calling

them away from what is bad, and preventing them from wandering into forbidden ground. He who says "be sober," adds "be vigilant, because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour, whom resist, stedfast in the faith."

Having, just now, recommended temperance and vigilance, I am naturally led to speak of prudence. This, aided by common sense, if it be not indeed a part of that principle, is of incalculable value, in enabling a man to decide for the present, and take precautions for the future, or, so to direct his preparations, and steer his course, as shall, ultimately, lead to the accomplishment of the object in view: and he shall succeed best, who keeps that object steadily before him, and studies and considers the means most fitted for obtaining it. Knowledge is useless, unless it be properly applied, and directed to the acquisition of good, or the prevention of evil. This faculty of judging and acting wisely, constitutes the cardinal virtue of prudence, the want of which, in the common course of life, cannot be compensated for, by the most brilliant talents. In morals, it is of incalculable importance, for its dictates must lead to the choice of the only true and permanent happiness. It consists in forming a correct judgment respecting any pursuit, or proposed plan of conduct, and in acting according to that judgment, either formed at first, or afterwards varied, according to circumstances, but uniformly tending, ultimately, to gain a good object. It is different from wisdom, inasmuch as it applies solely to conduct, or only to opinion, in so far as that is to have a practical influence on conduct; whereas, wisdom is rather synonymous with intelligence, and embraces speculative, as well as practical knowledge. Our Saviour says, "Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." That

is, be prudent; for the admonition does not apply to the acquisition, but to the practical application of knowledge. Prudence influences those opinions and parts of conduct, which relate to others as well as to ourselves. A man is to weigh well what is to be for his own good, and also what is to be for the good of others, and what effects may be produced to them by any particular conduct. Prudence may be considered under two circumstances; first, as leading, whenever the case is clear, at once to adopt the conduct prescribed as good; for instance, in all operations of duty, the decision is instantaneous in favour of performance, because performance is proper. Secondly, where the circumstances affecting the event are contingent, prudence implies the previous balancing of probabilities, and calculating on the consequences, before the determination be formed. In this respect it is similar to foresight; it makes a man look forward to the probable result, and choose the means of obtaining the good, and shunning the evil. In such cases, we must deliberate, and be cautious in determination, in proportion to the ambiguity and importance of the case. But let no man dignify with the name of prudence, those hesitations and apprehensions, those sentiments and actions, which proceed from imbecility or irresolution, from a selfish principle, or a cold heart.

Prudence is a virtue, under the power of cultivation, and which may be lost by thoughtlessness. I may briefly mention the following means of improving in it: Acquire as much information as possible on the subject in view, and on all collateral points. Reflect carefully, on the usual, and natural consequences, of particular opinions and conduct. Consider the advantages and disadvantages, of what is proposed or desired, and whether it be, in the course of things possible to obtain it. Being convinced of

its propriety and practicability, weigh the circumstances which encourage, and those which oppose it, promoting the one, and obviating the other, as far as can be done innocently, and without infringing our duty to others. Be governed by the dictates of reason, rather than by feeling or passion, and be cautious in proportion as the undertaking is important, or the effect irrevocable. Avoid all doubtful ground as far as possible ; decidedly and promptly shun what is evil, and as decidedly seek what is good ; flee temptation and leave it to the imprudent, to tamper with moral danger. With regard to our conduct to others, the most prudent part we can follow is to do to them what, were we in their situation, we would wish them to do to us. He who is prudent as the serpent, will indeed be harmless as the dove ; he will seek that which is truly good, fulfil every duty, and become “ wise unto salvation.”

IX.

Another important duty is to improve our time, especially with a view to the final judgment. Paul, who had been reminding the Ephesians that they had once been dark, but were now light, exhorts them from this consideration, to have no fellowship with the works of darkness, but to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, “redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” To a frail, and short-lived mortal, scarcely any advice is more important. The English verb, “to redeem,” though it may be traced to the Greek, is immediately derived from the Latin verb “*redimere*,” which is a compound of *re* and *emere*, to obtain, procure, or purchase, and signifies, to recover possession, of what had been lost, and also to ransom by paying a price. Hence, our Saviour is said to redeem man, because he was once in the service of

God, but was taken away by Satan, and regained by Christ. Now, in considering what is meant by redeeming time, it is evident that we cannot regain what has actually been lost, or already spent; but we may act so as to regain it from the same improper employment, and spend the present, and future, in a right manner. To redeem time, then, signifies, that we should no longer spend it as formerly, but improve what remains, to the greatest degree, and employ it to the purpose for which it was given. A motive to do so is added by the apostle, "because the days are evil;" that is, they are employed by wicked spirits, and our natural propensities, to the furtherance of evil, instead of good. This appears from the apostle, in the close of his epistle, encouraging the Ephesians to be strong in the Lord, that they may stand in "the evil day," when they struggle against the flesh, and wicked spirits, called principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickednesses. The admonition cannot fail likewise, of recalling to our recollection, the declaration of Jacob, that his days were not only evil, but also few. "Few and evil," said he to Pharaoh, "have the days of the years of my life been."

It is wise to examine the past, and observe its influence on the present, marking the opportunities lost, the benefits gained, the acquirements made, the advantages neglected. By connecting the past with the present, and looking to the effect of the former on the latter; by attending to how much might have been done, beyond what has even been attempted; by considering how differently we would, now, wish that particular periods had been spent, whether we look to the intellectual pursuits, or the moral, perhaps even the physical, conduct; by reflecting on the friends gained, the adversaries created, the duties performed or neglected, the facts acquired, the principles ob-

tained, or the habits induced, we must have it deeply impressed, that the past, is an instructive lesson, and admit, that the great teacher, experience, proclaims, with an authority, not to be disputed, that the present moment ought, strictly, to be improved for the benefit of futurity. For all those days and hours, recalled from the past for contemplation, were once the days and the hours for action and improvement as the present moment now is, which, like them, is hastening on to the ocean of eternity. It is the present moment, then, which is valuable to its possessor, a jewel, whose value is not appreciated till it be lost. Correctly speaking, it is not the soul which hurries through time, but time through the mind, and so finite and circumscribed are the powers of the most exalted spirit, that it is almost identified with the present instant. Ignorant of the future, and knowing the past, only, by the faculty of remembrance, it may be said to experience, and possess, only a succession of moments. To the infinite mind there is neither, in one sense, past nor future, all is for ever present; but of this attribute, man, who is the creature of a moment, can form no conception, and it would be presumption in him to speculate concerning it. Man's existence is made up of a continuation of instants, which, like sparks, vanish as quickly as they appear, and, yet, of these little moments, only a limited number is given to him on earth; and, although, they be passing off with the rapidity of lightning, they pass without care or observation, till so many be lost, as to form a tract of fearful length. Instants, are on their flight through the mind, and their long line, darts with the rapidity of lightning, each instant, carrying with it, to the book of God's remembrance, the thought and the act with which it was connected; and when the soul itself is called away, it goes hence with the thought,

and the act, of the moment when it was summoned. "As the tree falleth so it lieth," and happy is he who hath had that change, by the power of the Spirit, which shall give him security in the mediation of Christ. Of all the gifts, then, of God, to man on earth, time is the most important, and yet the least esteemed. It involves the very being of man, and is the very sheet on which his life, his moral history, is written. Like other gifts, it is so ordained, that it shall be valuable in proportion as it is improved, and the foundation of all solid improvement rests on the employment of the present moment. The wanderings of the imagination may lead away the judgment, the creations of fancy may be substituted for efficient endeavours, yet, let us not consider the power of imagination as useless. Fancy, when it excites the better feelings of the heart, and so warms the imagination, and stimulates the inner man, as to rouse to activity every power and every faculty, does become subservient to its best and most legitimate purpose. The judgment, directs to our determination, and our plans of conduct, but its decisions, to be carried into effect, must be obeyed at once. The time for action is the present moment. The period for exertion is the mere instant of time, which is now darting through the mind. The imagination, on the other hand, has its scene of action at a distance. Whilst the judgment forms our purposes for the future, imagination, embodies these purposes and decisions, and gives to them form and pattern, and scenic representation. But, in this compound process, the imagination, too often leaves the active powers behind it, and, the dupe of fancy, instead of steadily employing the present, to the accomplishment of his purpose, gives the rein to his imagination, forms a fair picture of bright and happy days, of success, honour, and renown, and wastes on the empty, useless, worthless contempla-

tion, of an ideal scene, the moments, which ought to have been devoted to the rearing of the fabric. Thus, a purpose is substituted for an effort, an intention for an action, a wish, a mere imagination, for a solid, continued, and well conducted train of studies, and active operations. Feelings, passions, mere dreams and delusions, occupy the life of man, and at its close, he finds that he has been cheated out of all that he had fancied, and that procrastination is, indeed, the thief of time.

There is only a certain time, allotted to every man, as a term of probation, a time for improvement, a time by which eternity itself shall be affected. The reflection is awful, that the few years of human life, which, when compared with eternity, are less than a drop in the mighty ocean, shall not only determine the situation of the soul, but even the precise degree of happiness or misery. This great gift of God, ought to be diligently improved, and spent in such a way as we could wish it had been, when we are about to appear, in the presence of the Judge who gave us life. Time and life, are in one respect synonymous terms, though, strictly, life is the principle, time the continuation of the operation of the principle. Life, is in general connected with an idea of time and corporeal existence. But we may do well to look a little farther, and connect, in our mind, the existence of the soul with eternity, and consider human life, as that short period of eternity, spent on earth, as a trial for a future state, during which, indeed, the soul is too subject to the body, too intimately connected to the transient things, which are to exist no longer than the period of probation. Life now, and life hereafter, are portions of the same existence, but the circumstances are greatly altered. Then, the state is everlasting, and subject to no change. Now, it is temporary, being the prelude to that state which shall

endure for ever, and we mark the progress of this, toward that, by divisions, in order to enable us to ascertain and remember it more correctly. This period is to all men very uncertain, and in itself is short and constantly in flight. Every moment diminishes its duration, and brings us nearer to eternity. He who listens to the beating of a clock, may reflect as he listens, that with each beat a moment flies, never to return. Perhaps, there is scarcely any thing, better calculated, to impress the mind, with an idea of the unceasing progress of time, than to look at the perpetual motion of the second index of a time-piece. This speaks to the eye, and each rapid revolution, proclaims that our life has become so much shorter. How many revolutions we may yet witness, we know not, but even for the way in which one of these periods is spent, we must give an account. Awful thought! Shall every minute return at the great judgment! shall we then have our whole life repeated, but without the possibility of improvement! How, then, ought we to spend the days and hours which remain? How cautiously ought we to employ every minute, seeing that every one, with all its thoughts, desires, and actions, shall return to our recollection at the last day? Every period of our life shall rise to view, whether it hath been spent in listlessness, in active vice, or in the service of God. How carefully then should we redeem time? How different does its value appear in the hour of health, and in the near prospect of death and judgment? How greatly do the best of men, on a deathbed, regret much mis-spent time, and with what different views is conduct beheld, at that solemn period, when all things assume their true and proper appearance? Ought it not to be the business of every day to determine, whether we have lived, thought, and acted, as we would wish we had done, when we come to die? and whether we

could answer, for this one day, this single hour, in the presence of the Judge? There can be no duty more indispensable, no wisdom greater, than preparing for the account we must at last give. By the choice we now make, is our state hereafter to be fixed, and by the diligence with which we do the work of the Lord, is the degree of reward to be determined. Did this impress the mind strongly, and were a faithful comparison made between time and eternity, we might well apply, to our whole short life, the words of Jesus, "what, could ye not watch *one* hour!"

Time is given us, the span of life is allotted us, that we may glorify God, and find our enjoyment in doing so. It was for this end that we were created and redeemed, and there is no permission to misspend time, more than there is to apply to it actual transgressions of the law of God. We are not merely to avoid the pursuit of sin, but we are to devote our time to God, and improve it to the utmost. There is no allowance for idleness. We are to be diligent in our secular employment, whatever, by the determination of Providence, that may be. A Christian is no more permitted to neglect his business, than to swear or steal; and whenever we find any one careless in providing for his own wants, or those of a family, or of the poor, we are sure, that, in so far, his faith is dead. There is a mean between carelessness and a love of the world, for both of these, are, decidedly, condemned by reason and in scripture. We are to be attentive to the prolongation of our life, and the preservation of our health, for we have just as little title to neglect our health, as to take away our life, and there is as great necessity, to use the means of preserving the vigour and welfare of the body, as there is, properly to employ any other gift of God, or to make the most of our time. We are to be diligent in the improvement of the mind, especially

in heavenly wisdom. We are not to be listless and inactive, but are even to gather up the fragments of time, and employ every portion in a useful way. The mind, indeed, as well as the body, must have some relaxation, but no more is to be allowed, than is necessary to recruit and preserve its vigour. Merely a change of mental operation is relief, and there is no opinion more false and dangerous than this, that the mind, to be recruited, must be indulged in frivolous pursuits. It cannot always study and investigate, but it can relax, and yet be invigorated, by indulging in imaginations beneficial to mankind, or by devotional reflections. No man will pretend to maintain, that after secular cares and duties, or after some hours spent in study, the mind shall be more relaxed by indulging in vain and frivolous, if not directly sinful, imaginations, or by the gratification of selfish or vicious passions, than by a train of thought, embracing the happiness of others, or promoting our love to God. Neither has any man, ever yet, proved, that the mind is better relaxed, and subsequently invigorated, by reading works addressed solely to the imagination, and whose tendency is to dissipate every serious thought, and inspire sentiments or desires, of a doubtful, if not positively of a vicious nature, than by the perusal of books of piety or science, or those labours of the historian, or compositions of the poet, which display the conduct and characters of men. I am far, indeed, however, from objecting to works of imagination; I only censure those which speak *to* the imagination alone, without in any way improving the heart or judgment. There are many works of imagination, which, to a thinking and well regulated mind, may prove more useful than some serious and matter-of-fact disquisitions. Many works which do not require deep consideration, or a previous training of thought, may with benefit be read at hours which

cannot be devoted to regular study. These store the mind with useful facts, or sharpen particular faculties, or hold out examples for imitation. On this subject, I may briefly observe, that every individual is the best judge of what may be read with improvement. Some minds can reap advantage from almost any work, for much depends on the intention in reading, and the reflections which arise from, and are encouraged by it. Neither are we to suppose, that because society is useful and excellent, it is expedient or salutary to relax the mind in gay, or dissipated, or riotous company. Instructive, cheerful conversation, both comforts and strengthens the mind, whilst frivolity, especially if prolonged, weakens it.

I conclude this subject, with one or two short advices. Never leave the mind to become inactive or listless, for, by doing so, it gradually loses its spring, and there is danger of becoming melancholy, or fretful, or habitually indolent. Regulate time, so as to apportion it, properly, to the various purposes and duties of life. Never procrastinate, or delay the duty which ought to be performed to-day, till to-morrow. Gain as much time as possible, and, every portion of it, not devoted to some definite purpose, use in one or other of the various modes of improvement, either solitarily or socially. Keep constantly in mind the great purpose of life, and the uncertainty, how soon it may terminate. Lastly, do not give up an undue portion of time to sleep, or to animal indulgence. There is no more allowance for spending time unnecessarily in sleep, than for gluttony. It is no excuse, that a man has no specific business of life, to be performed in the morning. Every man has business, every man has the duties of prayer, reading the scriptures, praise, meditation, and mental improvement to perform ; and he is no more justified in neglecting these, by indulgence in sleep, than in

neglecting his counting-house, or secular interest. If it be pleaded as an excuse, for neglecting any of the duties of life, any of the means of improvement, that he has no time, the answer is ready and decided. Let him not waste his time in sleep, and let him diligently employ every part of it, when awake. If there be any doubt remaining as to this advice, let a man calculate how many years of his life he spends in sleep, and how many days he should, every year gain, did he take no more than was fully sufficient to recruit the body and the mind.

X.

The last personal duty I shall particularize, is not, indeed, the performance of a special act, but rather the strenuous fulfilment of every duty, and an effort to increase in meetness for heaven. It is to strive for christian perfection, a duty so important that I may give it a separate consideration. A state of perfection and innocence, never was enjoyed by any mere man, but Adam, before his fall. None of his descendents can acquire moral perfection, keeping every law, and neglecting no injunction. The admonition, "be perfect," cannot, therefore, refer to that which is impossible, namely, perfect obedience, but to the perfection of the christian character, which consists in a cordial and active faith, that worketh by love. The perfection of Adam, before his fall, was personal innocence, and perfect obedience. The perfection of his posterity, is, to be full of faith, sanctified by the Spirit, and bearing the fruit of the Spirit. The praise, which redounded to God, from his creation of Adam, was from his innocence and obedience. The glory and praise, which redound to God, from redeemed man, proceed from his faith in Jesus, his union with him, and from being created

in him to good works, or the service of God. The perfection, then, of the Christian, consists in his living in Christ, and to him. The principle is love, the best and greatest fruit of the Spirit of holiness, and which shall abide, when faith and hope, shall have received their accomplishment. Jesus declared that the two commandments were, love to God, and love to our neighbour; and on these two, said he, hang the law and the prophets. In his sermon on the mount, he saith, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father, who is in heaven, is perfect." When we attend to what gave rise to the advice, it is found to be the commandment of love. Paul concludes an address on the same subject, with a similar admonition: "Be ye followers of God." John saith, "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." Paul tells the Romans, that "love is the fulfilling of the law;" and Timothy, that "the end of the commandment is charity, or love, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." Love, then, is the perfection of a Christian, love to God, and love to man, proceeding from faith in a Redeemer. But love, like faith, must be active. If we really love God, it must constrain us to live, not unto ourselves, but unto him who bought us with a great price. Did we know the magnitude of the evil, from which Christ came to deliver us, and aught of the unspeakable value of the sacrifice he offered—did we think, as became abject, helpless, and hopeless sinners, of the glory and the greatness of the Redeemer, and the infinite love he has manifested in the work of redemption, then, indeed, should the whole soul be filled with love, to that ever blessed Being, whose character is Love. And, with the full, and never-fading contemplation, of the mercy which led him to suffer and die for sinners, and strive with us, for months and

years, during our heedless career, we should, indeed, find the world subdued, and know, and feel, that Christ was the possessor of our heart; and, that in proportion to his supremacy there, and the greatness and constancy of our affection to him, who loved us, and died for us, and is guiding us to heaven, should be our conformity to him, and our perfection in the christian character.

No man, can say what degree of faith, and what degree of conformity to Christ, and that comprehends all moral perfection, may, under the blessing of God, be acquired on earth, by the constant and diligent use of appointed means. We are, therefore, always to endeavour to be more perfect, and more like Christ. Paul, whose example, surely it is safe to follow, tells the Philippians, that he was anxious that he might know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death, that he might attain to the resurrection of the dead; that is, to eternal life through Him, who is the resurrection, and the life, and who said, "Whosoever believeth in me shall never die; or if he were dead, yet shall he live." Paul adds, that he did not consider that he had already attained, or was already perfect, but forgetting the things which were behind, he pressed forward to the prize, even eternal life. We are to follow his example. What degree of perfection we may acquire is not the question. That which we ought to aim at, is the greatest of which man is capable. Doubtless, some make less progress than others, and yet, through the rich mercy of God, and the work of Christ, shall be made partakers of salvation. But no man is permitted to place any boundary to his progress, or to determine, that this, or that, is the degree to which he shall aspire. If he do acquire a given degree, and stop there, he does not remain

stationary. If he go not on, he must fall back. He, who no longer endeavours to improve, must become worse. He, who determines that here his progress shall stop, has not the spirit of Christ. It is, however, a very different thing to fail in attaining perfection, and to stop short in our efforts. As there is but one faith, so there is but one degree of fruitfulness, which is proper to Christians, and that is the greatest possible. This is the lowest degree allowed by the gospel, and it is confessedly the highest, to which the Spirit carrieth man in this life. The prayer of Paul, for the Hebrews, ought to be the prayer of a Christian for himself; "The God of peace, make you perfect, in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER VII.

OF RELATIVE DUTIES.

HAVING finished the remarks I had to make on personal, I now proceed to relative duties, which the former observations will enable me to discuss more shortly; as he who is careful to perform his duty to himself, and to preserve those habits and dispositions which have been recommended, must have made good progress towards the performance of his duty to others.

I.

One of the first and most essential duties of a relative nature, is love. There are three terms employed in speaking of this duty. Philanthropy, a compound word, signifying general love to mankind; Charity, a word also of Greek extraction, which does not mean the giving of alms, but universal good-will or benevolence; Love, which includes these, which are nearly synonymous, and implies the addition of a more lively affection, amounting even to a passion. This duty of love, indeed, is so requisite, that none of the rest can be performed without it, and when it is present, it will, as an active cause, give birth to all the others. If any man inquire what this universal love is, I cannot do better than offer him the description given by St Paul; Charity suffereth long—charity envieth not—charity vaunteth not itself—is not puffed up—doth not behave itself unseemly—

seeketh not her own—is not easily provoked—rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth—beareth all things—believeth all things—hopeth all things—endureth all things ;” and he adds as a recommendation, that charity never faileth—faith and hope shall be ended—but charity shall endure for ever, in heaven. As to the necessity of charity, he gives his opinion in the most energetic language. Though, says he, I had the gift of prophecy, and all knowledge, and faith which could move mountains, and bestowed all my goods on the poor, and even gave my body to be burned, yet if I have not charity, “it profiteth me nothing.” Peter expresses himself scarcely less strongly, for, after exhorting Christians, by the example of Christ, to cease from sin, and urging, as an inducement to vigilance, that the end of all things is at hand, he admonishes them to be sober, and watch unto prayer, and adds these remarkable words, remarkable, as uttered in the contemplation of the end of human life, and of the world itself, “Above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves ;” and he gives a short, and expressive definition of active charity—it “shall cover the multitude of sins.” Many superficial readers conclude from this passage, that alms can atone for sin ; but the apostle speaks of love, not of alms, and of the operation of the principle, not of the reward, seeming to have had in his mind the proverb of Solomon : “Hatred stirreth up strifes ; but love covereth all sins.”

It is worthy of observation, that the admonitions to christian perfection, given by Jesus, and his apostles, are either preceded, or followed, by an injunction to love, which is held out as the summit of Christianity. We find a key to this in the epistle of St John, who says, “God is love, and he who dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God.” This is the principle

which animates to all duty. Love to God is the ruling principle in the renewed heart, and naturally springs from faith in his promises, for without faith, there can be no love, and without love, faith is but an empty name. For, of Jesus, Christians may truly say, "Whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice." Love to God is the motive to serve and worship him, love to man is the animating cause, of the performance of every relative duty, and he who is fervent in love, never can be deficient in this performance. God, is said to be love, because he is infinite in that perfection. But he may as truly be called wisdom, or truth, or justice. Yet, as his love is the most conspicuous and refulgent attribute, in his relation to redeemed man, it is singled out for our contemplation, and is held forth for our imitation, as in us, it is the source of all other graces. Paul tells the Ephesians, that God gave teachers in the church, for the perfecting of the saints, till they come "unto a perfect man;" who being sincere in love, would grow up into Christ. He then goes on to give different advices, and concludes by returning to this grand rule of conduct, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us." This is perfectly consistent with the discourse of our Lord himself, who dwelt much on the necessity of love, and in his sermon on the mount, concludes his recommendation of brotherly love, by the powerful inducement of the character and example of God, "Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect;" and, almost immediately, after Judas had gone away to betray him, and before quitting the house, where he had instituted the sacra-

ment of the Supper, he began a comforting and instructive discourse, with this solemn and impressive saying, " Yet a little while I am with you," and the very first part of that little while, was occupied in enjoining love : " A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you ;" and this was again emphatically repeated, when he went out to the mount of Olives. The command is styled new, not because men were not formerly enjoined, by the law of Moses, to love, but because it was new in the motive and degree. Paul, therefore, when he wrote so strongly to the Ephesians, wrote not only by immediate inspiration, but by the remembrance of our Lord's words ; and he adopts the same reasoning with the Colossians, whom he exhorts to kindness and long-suffering, and to the forgiving of one another, adding, " Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye ; and, above all these things, put on charity (or love), which is the bond of perfectness." In all his epistles he enforces the necessity of love. He tells the Ephesians, that he gave thanks, and mentioned them in his prayers, when he heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the brethren. Let it be observed, that faith and brotherly love are the subjects of his thanks. He tells the same thing to the Colossians, and he rejoiced when Timothy brought him tidings of the faith and charity of the Thessalonians, observing to them, that " touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God, to love one another." He, in like manner, thanks God for the love and faith of Philemon ; and how earnestly he desired the growth of love, and how much he esteemed it, is manifest from his fervent prayer for the church at Thessalonica : " The Lord make you to increase and abound in love, one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do towards

you, to the end he may stablish your hearts, unblameable, in holiness, before God." Thus it appears, that he who hath attained to this love, is, of necessity, so far advanced, as to be established in holiness, and to have acquired that blessing, which, in the end of his epistle, is spoken of, as the consequence of the sanctification of the God of peace. There is, indeed, nothing more decisive of the christian character, no better mark of a true disciple, than love. St John says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren; he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death." "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love." "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Truly, no man can be a Christian, without love. No man can hope to be saved by faith, without love, for faith worketh by love, and without love, it is dead. No man can hope that he is sanctified, without love, for love is the fruit of the Spirit. These are most serious considerations, which it becomes every man on earth to attend to; for the result of an examination of the heart, upon these principles, must lead to the conclusion drawn by St John, "Hereby, know we that we dwell in him." Love is the effect of our conversion, the consequence of our union with Christ, the evidence of saving faith.

Christ loved men, and gave himself for them; therefore, we act in opposition to the spirit of Christ, if we love not our brethren. We are commanded to follow the example of Christ in all things, and are under as strong an obligation to imitate his love, as his patience, or obedience. He who willingly fails, in any part of conformity, must be presumed to suppose, that, either some part of our Saviour's character is unworthy of imitation, or, that he is at liberty to

resemble him in one thing, and differ from him in another, both things being admitted to be good. The impiety of the first, and absurdity of the second supposition, must be evident to all, and yet how few act as if the example of Christ were to be followed in all things. Like Christ, we are not merely to love the good, but all mankind. The vices and follies of men, are no ground of exemption from the operation of love and benevolence. We are to promote the true happiness of the sinner, though we hate the sin. We are to have charity towards the man, of whose conduct we disapprove. If this had not been the disposition of our Lord, man had never been redeemed. He, from divine and infinite love, came into the world to save sinners, to seek those who were lost, to lay down his life for those who had broken all his laws.

God is love, and exercises his power and providence for the happiness of his creatures, and in love to them. We, therefore, if we would be the image of God, must use our finite powers in love. Nothing exalts and purifies the soul so much as this, or tends so powerfully to root out evil passions and vices, or to promote inward peace, and true happiness. How much of the misery of life, proceeds from envying and grieving, from fretting at supposed slights, from being fearful of the success of another, from anxiety to engross all to ourselves. Love banishes these selfish passions, these jealousies, and feverish irritations of the mind. It is the want of love, which occasions most of our vexations, and the greatest part of our unhappiness. Were our eyes opened to a view of the trifling nature of those things which diminish love, and provoke envy and hatred, we could not suppose them to operate on rational creatures. The things of this life are, in themselves, altogether vanity, and even if they were of value, it is absurd to hate our neighbour, on account of them, because this disposition cannot

transfer the possession from him to us. We only torment ourselves, without deriving any advantage.

We are to love our neighbour as ourselves. If we inquire who is our neighbour, our Lord answers that question in his parable. If we inquire how we are to love him, the reply is, that we should do to him, as we would wish him, in similar circumstances, to do to us. We are to desire for him, what we should, in his situation, deem good for ourselves. We are, as it were, to place our soul in his body, and judge for him. The commandment, on this subject, is plain, the principle is clear. We are to love others, in the same manner as, but not to a greater degree than, ourselves. We are bound, by a rule of justice, as well as a rule of love, and he who would extend the latter, at the expense of the former, is generally to be found acting under the influence of an insane enthusiasm. We owe certain duties to ourselves, and have certain claims on us from others, but not alike from all. We are to love all with a cordial and active benevolence; but there are relations which admit of a peculiar love, as, for instance, those between parent and child, and which give rise to peculiar claims, for the exercise of active service. It is not, surely, the meaning of scripture that a man should take the same interest, in providing for a stranger as for his son, or should leave his family to starve, that he may supply others. God hath so constituted our relation to each other, as to divide the inhabitants of the earth into families, the individuals of which are bound, in a special manner, to love, and protect, and support one another. Nature points out this; and true religion is consonant to nature, for both proceed from God. Men who labour under mental disease, may pervert this, as they do other principles, but Christianity countenances no such delusion. He who exerteth not himself, to provide

for his own family, is declared to have denied the faith, and to be worse than an infidel. The scriptures give full and explicit rules for the performance of the various duties incumbent on different members of a family, and natural affection clearly teaches the parent to educate and support his son, the son to cherish and comfort his aged parent. But these duties and feelings do not absolve from the love and service we owe to the great family of mankind, to whom we are to wish every good, and every happiness, we might lawfully wish to ourselves, in their situation ; nor are we to rest satisfied with the wish, but we are to be active in benevolence. The rule is written, in legible characters, in our heart. It is to do to others, as we would that they should do to us. No man expects that a stranger is to assist him, to the same extent that he would his son, or to the extreme detriment of his son. But he who is in want, in sickness, in difficulty, in any danger, or distress, naturally thinks that his neighbour, who can relieve him, ought to do so, and petitions him accordingly, or, at least, inwardly desires his interference. No man, of a sound mind, ever expects aid, disproportioned to his wants, or to the means of his neighbour. He never forms unnatural or extravagant desires, but he does feel, that he who hath the power, ought to have the inclination to relieve his necessities. Now, this feeling, which is keen, because it is personal, ought to be the rule of this man's conduct to others, were the situation exchanged. Upon this principle, how very different should our conduct be, how active our benevolence, how universal our love, how unremitting our labours of kindness. Then, indeed, would be practised the advice of the apostle, that we should be so active in aiding others, that it would seem we were more anxious to comfort and assist them, than ourselves. " Let no

man seek his own, but another's wealth." Let no man engross his time to himself, but seek the welfare of another.

The law of love, then, clearly resolves itself into two parts, namely, that we are never to wish our neighbour an injury, and, by consequence, never to do him one; and, then, farther, that we are to wish him every happiness, his nature and situation admit of, every advantage, every degree of prosperity and success, every good thing befitting his condition, and accordingly endeavour, as far as in us lies, to promote the attainment of these objects. That which it is lawful and proper to desire for ourselves, we wish for him. Our desires, for ourselves, ought to be regulated by propriety, justice, and religion, and the command to do to others, as we would that they should do to us, must always be understood as connected with these principles. If it would neither be reasonable, nor proper for us, in our neighbour's situation, to desire certain things, there is no call nor duty in our endeavouring to procure these for him, however good the things may be in themselves. To maintain the contrary, would be to say, that we ought to lend our aid to realize every dream of the heart and imagination, and, as far as our means went, to feed the passions of vanity and ambition. Our duty is to desire for, and, as far as we can, to confer upon others all that they truly require, or may justly and reasonably desire. We give our advice, we give our influence, we give our company and knowledge, we give our mental or mechanical assistance, we give our hospitality and family comforts, we give our sympathy and condolence, we give our pecuniary aid, we give our countenance and approbation, we give our active services, one way or other, to all within the sphere of our knowledge, according to their particular necessities and our abilities; and if we give them this

active assistance, we must of necessity give them also our good wishes, and our prayers. Now, he who prays for the good of others, and the welfare of the children of God, without using the means in his power for promoting the end, is only mocking God, and deceiving himself, like him who prays that he may be delivered from the love of intemperance, whilst he is swallowing an intoxicating draught. This consideration surely ought to weigh with men, for all Christians admit the duty of love, and it is to be presumed, that all pray for the happiness of mankind. The obstacles to our practically fulfilling what we profess to desire, arise from selfishness, from indolence, from an idea that our efforts can add little to the general good, or are too trifling to be useful, from malignant passions, and from not feeling the influence of that charity, by which we pretend to be guided. Now, it is the duty of every man to subdue selfishness, for that is a part of the self-denial to which he is called. It is the duty of every one to be active, and to repress every thought which would weaken his love, or lessen his service. It is the duty of every one to act, as if the good and welfare of his neighbour depended wholly upon his individual efforts. This, it is evident, would greatly increase the sum of good which should be done ; and it is no less clear, that if every one imagined that his personal services were useless, and trusted to others more active, or better able to afford assistance, efficient benevolence should be banished from the earth.

If a man be sincere in desiring to be prepared for heaven, that is, in wishing to have his mind resemble that of a saint in heaven, as much as mortality will admit of, he must dwell in love, pure and universal love, for in heaven all love one another, and rejoice together as dear brethren. If the whole course of life here, be intended to make us “ meet to be par-

takers of the inheritance of the saints in light," surely, he who doth not live in love, doth not live in preparation for that state, where faith and hope shall terminate, and charity abide for ever. In heaven they love as brethren, as the workmanship of God, and his creatures, and here we ought to do so also.

We are all children of one parent, and he who hateth his brother, hateth him whom God made, and for whom Christ died. It is an established principle, that if we love God, we must love his works, and this principle ought to operate strongly and extensively. He who even unnecessarily injures a reptile, or wantonly destroys the lilies of the field, is endeavouring, perhaps unwittingly, to undo the works of God. All this earth, and its produce, all the animals it contains, are given by God for the use and service of man, but not to be hated, injured, or wantonly destroyed. If we are called to be humane to a fly, assuredly, the demand is inexpressibly stronger, to be humane and loving to a rational being, to a fellow-creature. God willeth the happiness of all his creatures, and if we torment the inferior animals and vex the rational species, surely we are, as far as we can, making those miserable who were created to be happy.

Love is enjoined on all, not on those alone who are of a kind and tender disposition naturally, but on every man as a christian duty; and no act, is an act of christian love, which does not proceed from a sense of this as a duty. An unjust man may, from the feeling of the moment, do an act of justice, and a man who hath no christian charity, may do an act of benevolence. Nay, further, a benevolent man may do many acts of kindness; he may give his goods to the poor, and yet have no christian charity. He may be a stranger to the new commandment, given by Christ, to love because Christ loved.

He who is full of faith is full of love. Whenever

the religion of Jesus shall prevail over the earth, and the souls of men be animated with faith, then shall love also prevail, and the metaphorical language of Isaiah be interpreted. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb; "they shall not hurt or destroy, in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord;" "and the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever; and my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation." Then shall the time arrive, when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn the art of war any more."

II.

All other relative duties, might, in their performance, be referred to the principle of love, and considered as flowing from it. But it may be more useful, to make a few observations on these as separate, though collateral, obligations. I go on, then, to offer one or two remarks on the duty of forgiveness. This is implied in the injunction of loving our enemies, and it is likewise delivered, as a special command, by our Lord, and repeatedly enforced on Christians by his apostles. Jesus, in a discourse to his disciples, said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." How little do the enemies of God, think of his love, which bestows on them, so many blessings of his providence! It is his sun which shines upon them, and cheers them; it is his rain which waters their fields; it is his bounty which

feeds, clothes, and comforts them. If this be the conduct of God, surely, they who are children of God, must act after the same manner. We are told, by St Luke, that our Lord enjoined his disciples, if their brother injured them seven times a day, and seven times repented, that they should forgive him. From a passage in the gospel by St Matthew, it is probable that they were disposed to take this in the literal sense, for they inquired, if they should forgive their brother, seven times in a day? The reply was, "I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven;" and to illustrate the matter further, Jesus delivered a parable, the conclusion of which is, that he who did not forgive his debtor as he had been forgiven by his master, was delivered "to the tormentors or prison-keepers, till he should pay all that was due by him;" and the application made is this, "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye, from your hearts, forgive not every one his brother." So important is the duty, that we are taught to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;" we are taught, to make a solemn appeal to God, that we have performed this duty. The apostles enforce the necessity of forgiveness, in strong terms, particularly from the argument that we are, through Christ, forgiven. The Ephesians are exhorted to be kind, "forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you;" and Peter, admonishes the saints to love, "not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing, knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing." There can scarcely be a more powerful motive, superadded to the express command of God, than the recollection of our own sins and infirmities, our guilt in the sight of God, and our failures in duty to our brethren. If we hope to be forgiven through Christ, certainly, we ought to

forgive others ; and when we feel resentment beginning, or are inclined to entertain thoughts injurious to our brother, it would be well, if, for a moment, we thought of these words, " Let him who is without sin, cast the first stone."

The gospel forbids the indulgence of hatred to our enemy, even if he continue in enmity ; we are to pray for him, and love him. Jesus, on the cross prayed, saying, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do ;" and his martyr, Stephen, who fell asleep in Jesus, just as he was quitting this life, kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, " Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." But the command goes farther ; for, if our brother repent, we are not merely to forgive him, but to be reconciled to him. The murderers of Stephen repented not ; they asked no forgiveness, yet he, in the spirit of his Lord, prayed for them, and forgave them. Had they confessed their error, and sought forgiveness, it is not to be doubted, that in his last moments, he would have held out to them, the hand of reconciliation, and received them as brethren. With regard to our conduct, towards an offending brother, our Lord gives explicit directions, which are recorded by St Matthew. We are to deal candidly and frankly with him. We are not to brood over his conduct, and nourish resentment and hatred, but we are to expostulate with him in private. If he hear thee, saith our Lord, thou hast gained thy brother, but if he will not hear, then we are to take one or two along with us, that they may be witnesses ; if he be still refractory, we are to acquaint the Church ; and, adds the Lord, if he despise the church, then he is to be condemned as a pagan. Yet even then, though our intercourse may cease, we are not to hate him, but pray for him, and bless him. It is evident that it must be a great offence, which calls for this

formal conduct: for, the Christian is enjoined not to be apt to take offence, and is to pass over many grounds of complaint, viewing them as unintentional or unimportant. He is commanded to bear with his brother, as well as to forgive him, to be exceedingly unwilling to construe any thing into an injury, to suffer long before he be offended. The duty of patience or long-suffering, is associated with that of forgiveness. God is not only called, a God of love, a forgiving God, but also the God of peace and of patience. He, then, who wishes to be a follower of God, must be peaceable and patient. This is the duty of a Christian. But whenever he is offended, there are two modes of procedure directed. The first, is quietly to pursue such a conduct as shall, by its gentleness and kindness, show the aggressor how inexcusable he is in remaining injurious, and thus a gradual, but sincere, reconciliation, is tacitly accomplished. Accordingly, Paul says, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head," which shall subdue his enmity, and refine his heart. The second is, to come, as soon as possible, to an explanation, in the true spirit of meekness, and, on finding that he is convinced of his error, to forgive him, and be cordially reconciled to him.

III.

A consequence of love is gentleness, which, together with meekness, is enumerated by Paul as a fruit of the Spirit. Meekness is a mild forbearing disposition, accompanied with, or proceeding from, humility and love. Gentleness, is a soft and kindly manner of deportment, and must be conjoined with, or productive of, a frank obliging conduct to equals, condescension to inferiors, and dutiful respect to

superiors. The apostle Paul says, "Condescend to men of low estate;" and a meek and quiet spirit, is declared by Peter, to be, in the sight of God, of great price, and he was, indeed, justified in saying so, even, although he had not been inspired. For, his Master had said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the land," the heavenly Canaan; and on another occasion, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly," or condescending. He who lives not in the spirit of meekness, lives not in the spirit of Christ. Those who are truly meek, have had both pride and anger subdued. They are mild and humble, loving and peaceable. There is no reason why we should follow one part of the spirit of Christ, and not every part. If we are to imitate him in obedience, in patience, in resignation, we must imitate him also in love and in meekness. Some, from natural temper, and early habits, find it more difficult to follow one path than another; but whatever the difficulty may be, they must follow the Lord whithersoever he goeth. The patient and the irascible, are alike commanded to be meek; and he who is disposed to pride and passion, must consider it as a necessary part of his self-denial and self-government, to live continually in the spirit of meekness. He who is thoroughly meek, will be gentle and kind to all men. The Christian is polite from principle, for true politeness consists in being gentle, obliging, and refraining from whatever can hurt the feelings of another. There is no better rule for acquiring this conduct, than to place ourselves mentally in the situation of others, and sincerely to do unto them, as we would wish them to have done to us in their situation. This produces the most delicate attention to the feelings of others, and the most kind and endearing conduct towards them. Harshness always implies a hard heart, or an unthinking head. Haughtiness and contempt of others,

indicate not merely the want of Christianity, but either the deficiency, or misimprovement of education and instruction. In general, it may be observed, that he who has risen from a low station, is less condescending, and more haughty than he, who from birth, has been accustomed to move in a high sphere, and who has no apprehension about his rank or dignity suffering by affability, but who, as he is polite to his equals, so is he, even in a greater degree, to him who appears to be neglected. In many respects a good education, and the advantage of having mixed in good company, will produce, though from different motives, the same gentleness and true politeness as Christianity. This gentleness, this christian meekness, is not confined to one time or place, but operates at all times and every where, represses anger, pride, and contumely, promotes all the kind offices of society, strengthens those ties which bind one man to another, and connect them in the varied intercourse of life. Were we to turn our eyes from our neighbour to ourselves, and reflect on our true character in the sight of God, our deportment would be indeed humble, our conduct mild and unassuming, and, with deep contrition of heart, we would acknowledge, that pride is not made for man.

IV.

A fruit of love is peace. The apostles enjoin this very forcibly: "Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, and all malice, and be kind one to another." In the epistle to Timothy, peace is coupled with righteousness, faith, and charity; and the apostle

James, after arguing against envy, strife, and the effects of that wisdom which is earthly, and in favour of that heavenly wisdom, which is full of mercy and good fruit, concludes by saying, "The fruit of righteousness, is sown in peace, of them that make peace." Now, he here speaks of some great advantage belonging to the peace-makers, and it is evident that by the fruit of righteousness, we are to understand the good fruit of which he had just been saying, that heavenly wisdom was full; and the meaning of this being sown in peace or peaceably, surely is, that this fruit must spring from a peaceable heart, that the peace of God shall rule in the heart of the peace-maker, who shall have heavenly peace. It must be some blessing, belonging to a peaceable disposition, that he is speaking of, and not of its effects; for in that case he should be made merely to say, that the peace-makers are peaceable, which is the same as if he said the good are good. Paul says, that affliction "worketh the peaceable fruits of righteousness, in them who are exercised thereby." The fruit of righteousness is evangelical purity, a righteous life, which is elsewhere called, "fruit unto holiness." Affliction, then, produceth a calm, steady holiness, internal peace, from a firmer reliance on God, the soul being led by affliction, to seek peace and consolation, in the promises of the gospel. The two apostles, speak of this peace, as being produced by these different causes. The one, as the effect of peace-making, the other, of affliction. The first, proceeding from love, and an imitation of Christ reconciling the sinner, leads the soul to seek more earnestly, reconciliation through that blood which alone can speak peace. The second, by showing us the evil of sin, which bringeth affliction, and by weaning us from this world, leads our views to redemption from the power of sin, to that blessed hope, which fills the heart with peace and joy, presenting

prospects of that happy land, where there is neither vexation nor any more tears. Surely, then, that conduct which produces the same fruit with affliction, which all men wish to escape, ought to be anxiously pursued, more especially, when we know that our Lord himself, pronounced a blessing on the peace-makers. "They shall be called the children of God." It is worthy of remark, that Paul comforts the afflicted by this consideration also, for, says he, "If ye be chastened, then are ye children." Now, the peace-makers may justly be called the children of God, or his followers, or imitators; for he is the God of peace, and gave his Son to reconcile the guilty world to himself. But our Lord is here speaking of a blessing, not of a ground of similarity, and is, I think, accordingly, to be understood, as promising the privileges of children to the peaceable, just as Paul comforted the afflicted, with the evidence of their being children, because they suffer chastisement. If, then, any one would wish to know what the blessing of the peaceable is, it is nothing less than being one of the children of God. It is, indeed, difficult to conceive how any man, who professes to follow Christ, can be otherwise than a peace-maker; for, if he be called to love the brethren, because Christ loved them, to forgive, because Christ forgave, he must reconcile, because Christ reconciled. In proportion as he possesses the Spirit of Christ, he shall possess the spirit of peace and reconciliation. He who hateth his brother, and stirreth up strife, is not of God, but is the child of the devil. He is one of those described by Paul, under the name of "*διαβολοι*," "false accusers;" or, as the word is expounded in the margin of our old Bibles, "make-hates," in opposition to peace-makers. From such men, who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof, Timothy is desired to turn away.

Those who profess to receive peace, through Christ,

from the God of peace, are not his children, if they give not peace to others. Were all men Christians in heart, we should have peace reigning universally, and in proportion as religion prevails in any society, so will that society be peaceable. There are two questions which arise out of the general consideration of this duty, and these relate to the lawfulness of legal prosecutions, and war. With regard to the first of these, it is to be expected, that in society, questions must arise, in which individuals may judge differently, and yet conscientiously. In all such questions, relating to right and wrong, the rule is positive, that the aggressor is to submit at once. We are immediately to yield the point. When we are wrong, we must be sorry that we have, from any cause, injured our neighbour, and are to make every just and proper reparation, voluntarily and unasked. But in those cases, where each is persuaded that he is right, or where there are mutual demands, which cannot easily be adjusted by the parties, the apostolic injunction is to refer the matter to a competent judge—a man of probity and understanding. This is both the most christian and the most prudent plan, and it will be difficult to assign a reason why a Christian, or a man only anxious to have what is just, should refuse to agree to arbitration. But if one of the parties be obstinate in not agreeing to this proposal, there is nothing in scripture, forbidding the defence of a right, by an appeal to the decision of a court of law.

With regard to the second question, the lawfulness of war, all men must agree that war is an awful and dreadful calamity; and whether considered in the principle which gives rise to it, or the consequences to which it leads, it must be esteemed a judgment from God, an evil which two nations, truly christian, can never project, far less desire. But as all men have not faith, and the wicked passions of men do prevail,

it may happen that one state is attacked by another, and its freedom and its existence threatened. In such a situation, there is nothing in scripture to forbid defence, or the use of those means which may avert the destruction; nor is it necessary to wait until a blow be actually struck, the avowed intention being a sufficient justification of defensive measures. We may defend our lives, and defend that freedom, and those civil and religious privileges, which make life dear. Some, from straining scripture language, make it unlawful to fight at all, but no man dare take away, unjustly, those blessings which God hath bestowed; and he who gave natural and important rights to man, gave also the power and liberty of preserving them. If it be lawful to kill a man in defence of our own life, and personal freedom, it must be equally so to act defensively as a society; the blood of the enemy is entirely on his own head; his life hath fallen a sacrifice to his own wickedness. It is evident, however, that war, to be just, must proceed from an absolute necessity of preserving the national property and independence, which can in no other way be maintained. It is also pretty clear, that in all cases, when war is just to one party, it must proceed from an unchristian aggression by the other. But too often there are faults on both sides, and it is the indispensable duty of sovereigns to endeavour, in the spirit of meekness, to reconcile all differences without drawing the sword; nor shall they, without punishment from God, unless they reform and seek forgiveness through Christ, involve their subjects in war, merely on account of some trifling object, some supposed spot upon their honour, far less from a desire of conquest, or the glory of arms. Let those who think lightly of war, reflect on the multitudes who, in one day, are hurried into eternity. Let them view the field of battle, the slain and the wounded, the deserted villages, the

ruined cities, and let them look on the tears and listen to the lamentations, of the widow and the fatherless. Let them behold the extensive and accumulated misery which attends the steps of military glory, and then may they ask the impressive question, "Whence come wars?" A war, to be just, must have an object adequate to its price: and no warfare can be vindicated which does not proceed from an attempt, on the part of the enemy, to wrest an essential part of a country, from its possessor, or to destroy the political existence, and civil and religious liberty of a nation. On such grounds a Christian is allowed to fight. The security of his people, is a trust committed to a christian king, which he is bound, at the price of his blood, to defend. Yet, although warfare to one nation may become necessary, and a duty, it is not the less true that all war is unchristian; one party, at least, must violate the command of God, and too often both are departing from the precepts of Jesus. It is scarcely necessary for me to make any remarks on private war. It has been said, that if a nation be permitted to fight, so may an individual, and that if any attempt be made to deprive him of his honour, more valuable than his life, he is bound to defend it by the sword. I readily grant, that an individual, like a nation, may fight in self-defence; but, like a nation, and still more than a nation, he is called on to consider, if there be no other mean of preserving his life and liberty, or property, than by taking the life of another. This is a question which he must answer at the day of judgment, and he is excusable or guilty, according to the answer of his heart. But who will pretend that some rash expression, some particular look, perhaps altogether unintentional, can justify a man in taking the life of his brother?—Christianity enjoins the forgiveness of greater injuries; and will it be said, then,

that murder is allowable? Nay, even a gross and wanton insult is to be forgiven, and is no ground for revenge, or the shedding of blood. It cannot be pretended, that this fighting, is in defence of life or liberty, or that we are warranted to expose our own life, even were it lawful to take away the life of the offender. Were that lawful, it would be more expedient and innocent, to steal behind him, and plunge a dagger into his heart. There is no defence of duelling, which will not powerfully apply to assassination, and it is only the arbitrary sentiment of mankind, which makes the one more honourable than the other, or, which makes us think the latter not to be more proper than the former. I cannot conceive a case which would justify duelling, which would not philosophically justify the immediate destruction of an enemy by any mean in our power. Nor can I conceive any insult or injury, for which the gospel does not prohibit revenge, and inculcate forgiveness. Yet, so contrary are the opinions of men, to the precepts and express commands of God, that in most nations, the man who deliberately kills his brother in a duel, and the mother who destroys the infant she hath born, escape punishment, or receive it in so slight a degree, that it is inflicted, rather in compliment to the feelings of those, who have not lost all sense of right and wrong, than in correspondence to the will of God, who hath not left it to the discretion of man to devise the punishment of a murderer, but hath himself pronounced, from the creation of the world, the sentence to be inflicted.

V.

Humanity, compassion, and sympathy, are christian duties, to be diligently encouraged and practised. Humanity, or mercy, consists in being sensible of the

distresses of others, and anxious to prevent or relieve them, the means of doing so, being supposed to be, in a sufficient degree, in our power. When we speak of a man being merciful to another, we always understand that the suffering or grievance to be removed, is very much dependent on the will of the person who shows mercy. Compassion is somewhat different from mercy. It literally signifies, suffering with the sufferer. It may be derived from sympathy, and is always associated with a disposition to relieve, although the means of doing so, may in no degree be in our power, and in this respect it differs from mercy. If we attend to the etymology, we would say, that compassion can only be exercised towards those who are sensibly suffering, under real, or imaginary evils, whilst the feeling of pity, may exist with regard to those, who, so far from suffering under their misfortune, rejoice in, and court with avidity, the poisonous cup. Sympathy is, from its derivation, the same with compassion, but, in the general acceptation of the word, it is applied rather to feeling than suffering, and may be explained to be fellow-feeling. It is expressive of a participation in the joys, as well as the sorrows, of others. These different feelings, are enjoined, expressly, in the gospel, and necessarily, proceed from christian love. Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." They who are sensible of the mercy of God, and hope for salvation, through the sacrifice of their Redeemer, must be merciful; and he who is merciful, as a follower of Christ, shall assuredly obtain mercy. Jesus, not only pronounced a blessing on this disposition, but he gave, in himself, an example of it. When he saw the multitude, as sheep without a shepherd, he was moved with compassion, and, long before that multitude had existence, compassion led him to offer himself as their Saviour.

God, whose moral perfections we are called to imitate, is declared to be rich in mercy, because he hath made alive those who were dead in sin. When he passed before Moses, he proclaimed himself "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." To his creatures, he declared, "I desired mercy, more than sacrifice;" and, by his Spirit, speaking in latter times, Christians are called to be "pitiful, tender-hearted, to put on bowels of mercies, to be gentle, showing meekness to all men." They are, however, not merely to pity the afflicted, to be merciful to those whose situation is, in any respect in their hands, but they are "to rejoice with them that rejoice," as well as "mourn with them that mourn." We are called, as certainly, to sympathize in the joys and comforts of our brethren, as in their afflictions. How unkind, how hurtful, how much resembling the temper of Satan, it is, to poison the cup of gladness, to damp the hopes, to lessen the innocent pleasure a man takes in any expectation, or acquisition, or to make him dissatisfied with that we find him pleased with. We are, if actuated by the spirit of the gospel, to encourage him, in every innocent comfort and gratification. We are to congratulate him, and are also ourselves, so far from envying him, so far from being even indifferent to his joy, or beholding his comfort with coldness, to take a sincere pleasure in his happiness and prosperity, and express our satisfaction to him. In like manner, we are to mourn with the afflicted, to treat their sorrow, not merely with respect, but with warm sympathy, to be active in alleviating their grief, and in removing the cause, or lessening, as far as we can, the excessive effect.

VI.

Gratitude, is a modification of love to another, on account of some benefit intended, or actually conferred. It is love, arising from this particular cause, and varies, in degree, according to the sensibility of the mind, and the magnitude of the favour, which is estimated, not merely, by its intrinsic value or importance to the receiver, but, also, by the difference in age or station, between the giver and receiver, the degree of exertion made to procure it, and the ground there was to claim, or expect this exertion. There must be a different feeling for a favour conferred by a parent, or a stranger, or a man whom we have injured, and from whom we are conscious we deserve nothing. We are commanded to love all mankind, but, when we receive a favour, there is an additional motive to love the giver and be thankful to him. The favour calls as naturally for gratitude, which is a feeling partaking of love and thankfulness, as a promise does, for its performance, or as the reception of merchandise does for the payment of its value. Gratitude is an act of justice, and the want of it is said to be as the sin of witchcraft. The keenness of the feeling of gratitude, is not altogether in our power, for the passions are not excited by the reasoning of a moment, but every man, whose mind is not callous, must feel thankful for every benefit. Gratitude, as a virtue, is a fixed purpose of the mind to be thankful, and to express this by acts, when opportunity or necessity shall occur. He who neglects to assist his benefactor, much more he who turns against him, not only proves how unworthy he was of the favour he received, but breaks the commandment of love, does an act of injustice, despises the injunction, to do to others as he would wish them

to do to him, and injures the interest of society, by diminishing the encouragement to do good.

VII.

The next duty to be inculcated, is that of giving active assistance to those who require it. The demand for alms, or pecuniary assistance to the poor, is founded on two things—the feeling of compassion, which is implanted in the heart of man, and the express command of God. It is not left to the first, which may be blunted, which may vary with the sensibility of the constitution, or be destroyed by selfish considerations. It is, therefore, made a positive duty by the ordination of God, as certainly as justice or integrity, nor, is there any obligation on a man to be just or sober, which does not equally bind him to be charitable to the poor. It is just as reasonable, for a man to suppose he may be a Christian, and yet cheat his brother, or be an habitual liar or a drunkard, as to imagine he may be a disciple of Jesus, and yet give no alms, and live only for himself. God, by the voice of Moses, enjoined not merely giving relief to the poor, but even particular modes of doing so. No man, for instance, was permitted to glean his field; the gleanings were the property of the poor. Every Israelite was commanded to open his hand wide unto his poor brother, an intimation being at the same time given, that whatever might be the general prosperity of the nation, there should never cease to be poor in the land. In every state there have been, and there must be poor, unless the constitution of things be so far altered, that every man shall be strong, and healthy, and active, and young, and meet with neither injury, nor fraud, from his brother. From the mere circumstances, alone, of the helplessness of infancy, and the

infirmity of age, a state of dependence must be induced, and in the actual state of mankind, how many causes of poverty, so surpass these, as to make them be almost overlooked. The poor are appointed to a state of poverty, because it is good for them, and shall assuredly, promote their spiritual benefit, if they improve it aright. But we are not to confine our views to the effects on the poor themselves; a state of poverty has also a relation to the rich, and is a mean of trying and increasing their love. God hath formed provision for all his creatures, and gives it to them by his providence, but not to all in the same way. To some, it is given by inheritance from their fathers; to others, by means of their own labour or ingenuity; to others, by the aid of those who have more than they require themselves. Were there only two inhabitants on an island, and one of these to become helpless, it certainly would be binding on the other, to feed and cherish him. Brotherly love would prompt him; the rule of doing to his brother, as he would wish to be done to, would bind him; the reflection that God had deprived his brother of the power of assisting himself, but had in him continued the means of support, especially when strengthened by the recollection of the express command of God, would lead him to feed his brother, and preserve his life. What would be thus binding on two people, is so also on a larger society. The rich have nothing they do not receive from God, and receive their wealth, that they may glorify the Giver. That portion which is left after supplying their own wants, is not to be misspent, wasted, or hoarded, but is to be devoted to the support of those, whom God hath created, and hath committed to the care of the rich for sustenance. The rich are to be the means of feeding these poor, as certainly as labour is the mean of feeding the labourer. It is the duty of every man

to use his faculties, and his acquisitions, to the glory of the Giver, and no one is permitted to misemploy his money more than he is to pervert his rational powers. He who spends his money in luxury, and still more in riot, and dissipation, is assuredly abusing a gift of God, as certainly as he who clouds his reason by intemperance. What should we say of that man, who had the power by a word, of restoring the sick to health, the afflicted to happiness, the cold, the hungry, the naked, to comfort, and who, yet would not pronounce that word, but would rather abuse himself, his friends, the whole world, than utter it? Would we not look on him, as worse than a savage, fit only for associating with tigers, or fiends who delight in misery; and yet, in what respect is he truly worse than those, who have the power of relieving the distresses of their fellow-creatures, by putting their hands into their pockets, but will not do so, and who will rather spend all their money in luxury and sinful pleasures, than in the service of God? If we be called to imitate God, in using all our powers and gifts for the good of the creatures of God, surely, we do not obey our calling, if we do not spend as much of our time and money as possible, in works of love and beneficence, in becoming a father to the fatherless, a supporter of the widow and the orphan, a comforter of the poor and distressed. If we be called to love the brethren, because Christ loved us, we are called also to perform acts of love, and are exhorted to charity, by the apostle Paul, from this consideration, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes, he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich." The argument is irresistible, the example must be followed by all who profess to have the Spirit of Christ, and this charity is both a fruit of the Spirit, and a proof of love.

It is evident, that a man who has barely sufficient to support himself and his family, cannot, without injuring his own health, or that of his family, or depriving his children of education, give alms of his money. He is in that intermediate state between the poor, and those who have somewhat more than their necessities require, which cannot afford to give, and yet needeth not to receive. This man, however, will give his prayers and good wishes, and often a part of his time, his assistance, advice, comfort, and sympathy; and his mite may indeed be more in the sight of God, than all the rich donations of the wealthy. He says, with Paul, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, I give unto thee." No state is exempted from giving what may be given, money, labour, good wishes; "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." All ranks have this precept addressed to them, from an infallible prophet, "Give alms of such things as ye have." Those who have the means of giving, and yet do not give, must refrain, either from thoughtless inattention to the distresses of others, and to the duty demanded of them, in which case, it is time to become wise, lest they be taught by a painful lesson; or from avarice, which is adding a positive vice to an omission of duty; or from spending in luxury all that money which remains, after supplying their necessities; or from laying up a provision for their family. I presume, it will not be requisite, to show the misconduct of the thoughtless and avaricious, but it may be useful to make one or two remarks on the other classes. With regard to the excuse, arising from the total consumption of income in necessities and luxuries, I have no hesitation in saying that the call for giving alms is so strong, that a man is bound to deny himself some of the comforts of life, much more its luxuries, if he

cannot, otherwise, contribute to the support of others. He who spends his money in luxurious living, and expensive amusements, does, unjustly, deprive his poor brother of the means of comfort; and, with respect to himself, spends his money sinfully, and hurtfully, inasmuch as it is applied in support of wrong principles. I do not from this insinuate, that a man is bound to deny himself those comforts, or to relinquish that establishment necessary to his situation, and useful for fulfilling his part in society. But, if he cannot give alms, otherwise than by keeping one servant less, or giving fewer and less expensive entertainments, he is bound to do so, and must have much more satisfaction in reflecting, if his income demand the sacrifice, that he has relieved the wants of the poor, than, that he has procured a superfluity for himself. A man is bound not to exceed that expense, and degree of state, his rank in society properly requires, and must give more liberally to the poor, in proportion to the surplus gained.

As to the other plea of making provision for a family, the object is not only laudable, but is expressly commanded; still, it is not to be accomplished at the expense of the poor, more than it is to be done by robbing the rich. Besides, it is to be inquired whether, in order to make this necessary provision, all luxuries and superfluities be given up? If not, then surely, from the money spent in procuring these, alms are to be given. As there is a positive command to give alms, which is as binding as the command to be honest, or holy, coming from the same God, it is evident, if a man cannot provide for the future wants of his family, indulge in present luxuries, and give to the poor, that the retrenchment is to be neither in the first nor the last, but in the superfluities. A man's children cannot be expected to be worse, in a pecuniary view, by any

sane charity given by their father, and it may be expected, shall have the greater blessing on what they receive.

The best way, perhaps, is, for every man to set apart, at once, a certain portion of his yearly income for charity, and consider that as no longer his own, but dedicated to the service of God in the support of the poor, or the promoting of pious purposes. This plan has two advantages: first, being done deliberately, it will convince or satisfy the careful, that they are not giving more than justice approves of; and, secondly, it will make the thoughtless certain, that the duty shall not be neglected. Being set aside, it is at once put out of their power to revoke the grant, or to procrastinate the gift. When a call is made, the question no longer is, whether the individual have money to spare, at the time, but simply whether the applicant really require aid?

A man is not exempted from giving voluntary alms, because he is, legally, compelled to contribute to the support of the poor, unless he can answer to his conscience, that this contribution puts it positively out of his power to give more.

Whilst we are to make a distinction between the deserving, and those who would only apply our bounty, to the support of their profligacy, still we must not refuse assistance, merely because the objects are unworthy and ungrateful; for God giveth rain to the good and the bad: all are the objects of his bounty. Neither is it an excuse that we know not any person who actually requires our aid, and will not apply what he receives to a bad use. If this plea be sincere, then, it only remains to give the alms to a clergyman to distribute, or to the support of a charitable institution.

I conclude my remarks on this duty, by urging the repeated admonition of our Lord and his apostles.

Jesus saith, "Give alms of such things as ye have." "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him who hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." "Give unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." And, in the description of that awful day, "when the Son of Man shall come in his glory," the blessed are represented to be those who fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, took the stranger in, clothed the naked, visited the sick and the prisoner;—for, "Inasmuch," says our Lord, "as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me." We here learn, not only the general duty, of giving assistance to the necessitous, but a special reason for aiding Christians, because they are disciples of Christ. In this case, it is given as a mark of love to Christ. Paul directs every man to lay apart, weekly, a certain part of his gains, for the use of the poor. He urges Christians to give, "not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver." And lest any one might be backward, from a consideration of the personal loss to himself, he adds, "God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye, always, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." This was, also, the opinion of Solomon, who said, "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given, will he pay him again." James declares, that "pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." The work of charity is coupled with a renunciation of the world, and a union with Christ. John says, "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Let him, then, who neglects

this duty, and who does not practise it, to all the extent in his power, reflect, that he is disobeying the express command of God, that he is deficient in brotherly love, and refuseth to part with that which was given to him, for the express purpose of enabling him to show his love. He who loves his money above the commandment of God, surely is guilty of idolatry, and he who refrains from giving now, because he may hereafter be in need himself, is mistrustful of Providence, and forgets, that notwithstanding all his care, riches take wings unto themselves and flee away. There is a blessing promised to the meek, the poor in spirit, the pure, the peace-maker, and there is a blessing also to the charitable—"They shall have treasure in heaven;" and he who, alone, had the words of everlasting life, hath said, "Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

VIII.

A duty, similar in principle to the preceding, is to "use hospitality, one to another, without grudging." This is to be done from the same principle as we give alms, for it is only a different mode of comforting and cherishing a class of brethren who cannot receive, and may not require alms. It is proper, also, on the great principle of doing so to others, as we would wish them to do to us. It is a mean of increasing our intercourse as social beings, of promoting instruction, edification, kindness, and friendship. It is an effect of love, a mean of comforting and exhilarating our brother. The Christian is a lover of hospitality, but not of riot, or the destruction of time. He has two objects in view; first, promoting friendship; and, second, affording comfort and

kindness to those who require his aid. In the first view, he entertains his relations, his friends, and equals; in the second, it is his duty to extend his hospitality to the friendless, the orphan, to those who have few or no domestic comforts, to those who are entering into the world, or are sinking into the helplessness of age, to those who have not yet acquired friends, or who have lost or outlived their acquaintance. There is the same positive call to act in this way, as to give alms. It is a branch of the same duty, for it resolves itself into supplying the wants of others. The difference is, that the contribution of alms, is directed to the relief of those who are in want of the necessaries, the exercise of hospitality, to those who are deficient in the comforts of life.

IX.

Another relative duty, which springs from love, is to endeavour to improve the minds of others, especially in morality and religious knowledge. This is to be done by prudent instruction and admonition, by example, and by contributing our money and influence, to the support of those associations, which are formed for teaching the poor to read, and propagating the gospel. It is peculiarly the duty of every man, to instruct and improve those with whom he is particularly connected, and over whom Providence hath given him a superintendence. But, even in a man's general intercourse with his brethren in society, how many opportunities may he have, of offering some sentiment which may be favourable to religion, or of repressing profane and sinful conversation. It is by no means prudent or useful in every company, and at all times, to introduce religious subjects, but a Christian, wherever he is, will take care, that so

long as he is present, religion be treated with respect, and that avowed infidelity meet with an instant check. It is particularly binding on the old and the learned, to reprove profanity, and encourage sentiments of piety toward God.

Every man must be careful as to the example he gives, more especially if he profess to be a Christian. It is a very dangerous mistake to suppose, that because a man is not in a public situation, his example has no influence ; every man has a certain influence within his own circle, and, although, it be peculiarly binding on those in a conspicuous situation, by their example, to promote religion, and discourage vice, yet, the conduct of every one, is so far important, as to influence that of his companions : “ Evil communications, corrupt good manners.” It is, therefore, a duty every man owes to society, as well as to his friends, to reflect how far his actions, his temper, his conduct, his conversation, may encourage true religion, or give it a deadly blow ; and it is a duty every man owes to himself, to inquire how far the companions he has chosen, assist him in serving the God he hath chosen. It is undeniable, that we are created to glorify God, and are commanded to honour his holy name. Do we then glorify God, and promote his honour, when we not only speak of him without veneration, neglect to observe his laws, and show him little love, but, by our example, lead others to think lightly of sin, to deceive themselves as to the strictness of the law of God, and, perhaps, even to trample under foot the mercies of the gospel. Let every man reflect, that his conduct is not only to be judged, as it respects himself, but as to its effects on others. Some things in themselves lawful, are on this account not expedient, and a man shall be judged, according to what he induces others to do or neglect, as well as by what he doth himself. He will, there-

fore, do well to attend to the advice of Paul, given to Titus, "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works;" and ought, strenuously, to endeavour to adorn the doctrine of his Saviour, by living a holy and unblameable life.

Respecting the obligation to propagate the gospel, it is surely not necessary to say much. He who daily prays, "thy kingdom come," certainly mocks God, if he do not use all the means in his power, to obtain the accomplishment of his prayer. Could a spirit, who had left this benighted world, for the mansions of glory, be permitted once more to communicate with its thoughtless inhabitants, and to single out an individual, whose eyes he might touch, that they might be opened, to discover what is hid from mortals, should not that astonished individual, behold two very opposite states, separated by a well marked though narrow line; on the one side, should he behold that holy region, which is bright by the glory of God, and where the unceasing adorations of his intelligent creatures are offered; whilst, on the other, should be found, a world lying in all the darkness of ignorance and moral stupefaction, its multitudes of spirits subjugated by spirits more powerful and more wicked, quite insensible to the God who was near them, and altogether unconcerned as to the judgment which awaited them. This is, indeed, beyond the power of a created spirit to perform, but the Spirit of God does accomplish this work, by opening the eyes to behold the wondrous things which are in the word of God, animating the stupified mind, purifying the heart, and rectifying the judgment. And the man thus enlightened, and thus convinced that the danger is pressing, goes forth, not only to proclaim the great things God hath done for him, but, with all his talent, and all his energy, and by every mean in his power, to call to others, that they may rise,

and escape from the city of destruction. Can it be possible, that any man who hath been brought to the knowledge of Jesus, does not desire to bring others to the same knowledge, or does not adopt the spirit of Philip, who said, "Come and see." If he have been convinced of the evil of sin, and its destructive tendency, surely, he will wish to save others from it. If he have obtained forgiveness through Jesus, he will be anxious that others also be forgiven. If he believe that Jesus came to earth to save sinners, he must desire to assist in that great object. If he be convinced that there is no other way of salvation, he must be anxious to direct all mankind to it. If he be persuaded that one thing is needful above all others, that the soul of every man is precious, that peace and joy, and everlasting life, are offered to all through Jesus, christian love must prompt him to lead those who are in darkness into light, those who are dead in sin, to that great Redeemer who can give life to a man though he be dead. If the scripture be admitted to contain that knowledge, which alone can improve the life, make a man happy here, and blessed hereafter, I can conceive no duty equal to that, of giving the Bible to those who have it not, and cannot purchase it. If the greatest treasure a man can possess, be the word of God, the greatest advantage must be, the ability to read it, and know its contents. Instruction in reading, must always accompany the useful distribution of the scriptures. It is one of the most favourable signs of the present time, that all ranks of people unite in promoting national education, in so far as that is connected with the diffusion of the word of God; and all education, not founded on the basis of Christianity, will, eventually, and too surely, prove destructive of the best interest of society. It was the knowledge of the scriptures, and their dispersion among the people, which gave the first blow

to superstition, and revived pure religion. It is acquaintance with the gospel, and the influence of its precepts, which alone can make a people happy, or preserve a nation from relapsing into barbarism, infidelity, and ferocity. Christianity uniformly improves society, and exalts a nation, and, wherever it declines, the character of that nation sinks, and its punishment, if not its total destruction, is to be expected. It surely, then, is the duty of every man, to contribute to the utmost in his power, to those philanthropic and patriotic exertions, which are made to enable the poor to procure and read the word of God, which alone can make them wise unto salvation. But we are not to confine our efforts to our own land, though that be the peculiar object of our care, and of our prayers. We are also to endeavour, as far as possible, to make the whole human race acquainted with that salvation which was intended for every son of Adam. We assuredly believe, that a time cometh when the gospel shall be preached to all men, and when all shall know the Lord. We are ignorant of times and seasons, but we know that in the ordinary course of providence, God worketh by natural causes, and of these, surely, the most likely, is the distribution of the scriptures, in the language of different nations, by which we may, under the blessing of God, expect, ultimately, to destroy all false religion, to purify Christianity from every mixture of superstition, and to break the power of the false prophet and of idols.

X.

The duty of communicating to the dying, an intimation of their danger, is so painful, that it is always performed with reluctance, and very often is postponed till too late. Yet the duty is imperative, and

the cruelty great, in neglecting it, and permitting an imperishable soul to enter unprepared into eternity. It is objected, that the communication may be attended with injurious effects, both to the body and the mind; but those best qualified to judge, must say, from experience, that a prudent intimation of the truth, so far from proving prejudicial, is in almost every instance, productive of a calmer state, and never does harm. To delay repentance, and the deep consideration of eternity till the last, is doubtless criminal, as well as foolish and unsafe. Nor is it always possible, even in the near prospect of death, to feel duly impressed with the awful change which is to take place. But without discussing either the danger of delay, or its criminality, or the possibility that indifference may continue to the last, it nevertheless is a duty both toward the good and the bad, and to men of all descriptions of character, to hold forth, in the hour of suffering and danger, the offers, and the hopes, and the consolations of the gospel of Christ. We ask not what may have been the degree of wickedness, or what the degree of indifference to religion, or what the carelessness, and the thoughtlessness in former life. All we now ask is, whether the rich mercy of God be ready to be accepted. We offer, even at the last hour, the hope of peace and reconciliation. We say, that whatever may have been the past life of the individual, there is now, by the visitation of providence, a call made to consider his latter end, and the evil of his ways, and return and come unto Him who alone can save. There is an offer made by the Saviour, of peace and of mercy. He came not to the world, to condemn the world, but to save sinners. He comes not to any man, in this world, in any other capacity, than a priest and a mediator. He accuses no man here, but is ready to plead for him and save him. From birth till death.

he is offering himself to every one, not only offering himself, but entreating every one, to come unto him and be saved. He stands at every deathbed, and offers himself, by his word, to the dying man; and so long as there is life, there is no sentence of condemnation, but an earnest entreaty for reconciliation. It is only after the thread of life is cut, and the soul separated from the body, and removed from this world, that he pronounces condemnation. He has delayed, till the period of probation have ended, and the sinner have chosen his own doom. Whilst here, all is mercy and love. The rich grace of God accompanies the soul to the very threshold of the grave, and, till the last gleam of reason be extinguished, the Saviour is still offering his mediation, and if accepted before that last ray expire, the soul is saved, and the adversary deprived of his prey.

We come to the sick, and the afflicted, and the dying, with words of comfort, and of peace. We tell them that they are indeed sinners, lost and perishing sinners, within a short distance of their final doom; but we tell them also that there is still hope; nay more, still certainty, absolute certainty of safety, if they will only come unto Jesus and be saved. We tell them, in his name, that he makes no stipulation as to the hour, nor any objection as to their past indifference. We tell them, on the faith and security of the promise of God, that if they really desire to be saved by Christ, they shall be saved. But we conceal not, that it must be by Christ alone, and that they must desire to be delivered from the power and the love, as well as from the punishment of sin. They must see that they have offended God, and broken his commandments, and have neither righteousness nor atonement of their own, to offer. They must come with the feeling, that they have no hope in themselves, and with that awful sense of the holiness

of God, which makes them sensible, that even the guilt of one sin must exclude them for ever from his favour. They cannot fail to feel, if they be really sensible of the evil of sin, and its danger, that they have, to all their other guilt, added that, of lightly esteeming the Rock of their salvation. They have, for years, heard of his death and sufferings, but have they felt deeply penetrated with love or gratitude; have they duly prized those sufferings which were undergone for them; have they really ever looked on Jesus, when hanging on the cross, with any personal feeling, or thought, as the importance of the subject demanded, on the cause of these sufferings, and their own deep interest in them? The consideration of their great insensibility, or continued indifference, and of the coldness of their love and regard toward him who came to save them from the terror of the present hour, and the final ruin which awaited them, now appears one of the greatest sins they have committed. But even then, we would say, that Christ came not to condemn, but to save, and that they are just as certain of acceptance and forgiveness now, if they will only come unto him, as if they had come years before. We have no authority to make limitations, the offer is universal, and without exception, and the dying man has it as freely made to him, as if he were in health and vigour. All that is required of him is, that from the heart he cry, What shall I do to be saved? and the answer from heaven is, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. There is no ground for fear or discouragement to those who, even at the eleventh hour, cry for mercy. In this trying state, it is indeed difficult for the dying man to say whether he really feel, as he desires to do, the wish to be delivered from the power and the love of sin, and whether he hate it, because it is hateful to God, or only because he is afraid of

punishment. He has but now awakened from his sleep, and doubts and fears assail him. He would fain trust in Christ, and yet he fears he will not receive him, or, that he must be better, before he can be safe. He would fain think of God and of religion, but his thoughts wander to the world. He would fain be delivered from punishment, but still he doubts, whether if he recovered, he would truly wish to be delivered from sin. Now we tell him, that if he only continue to pray for deliverance, and for the Holy Spirit to sanctify him, he shall be saved. We press not on him his doubts and difficulties, but urge him to depart from the power of sin, as the angels urged Lot to leave the plain. We hold out, again and again, the power and the mercy of Christ, and the promise of the Spirit, and we tell him, that God does not accept him, because he has lived to comply with his law, and perform religious obedience, but, because he has trusted to the redemption of Christ. It might be satisfactory to himself, were he to live and give sure proofs of obedience, with evidences of a spiritual change, and have some time here, for a state of preparation of mind, for the enjoyment of heaven. But we can truly say to him, that his acceptance does not depend on his living to perform, for a certain time, the christian duties, for this very day, if he will trust in Christ, his salvation is made sure. We tell him, indeed, to think humbly and diffidently of himself, and to pray for strength and grace, but we tell him not to doubt the power, or the promise of God. We break not the bruised reed, but assure him, that he is not more anxious for safety, than Christ is willing to receive him. Mercy and reconciliation, are the prospects we hold out, and that with an earnestness and a certainty, resting on the word of God himself. Yet thus, it may be said, we speak peace to those to whom there is no peace, and send,

in hope and confidence, a spirit to the judgment of condemnation. Now, we know not, and judge not, of the sincerity of repentance or faith, but this much we know, that during the life, and at the death of Christ, his work was a work of love and mercy, without restriction and without exception. Publicans and sinners, and those from whom seven devils were expelled, received his pardon. In his hour of trial, he looked on Peter, who denied him, not to condemn, but to forgive. On the cross, he received with grace, the repentant sinner, and during all the period of the work of redemption, it stands as a recorded truth, firm as the power of the Almighty, that no one who comes to the Redeemer, will be rejected. We speak peace, for we know that in him is peace, and we urge the calls of mercy, and the hope of deliverance, and the joys of heaven, as long as the dying man has a mind to comprehend, or a heart to feel and believe. We speak not peace, indeed, to him who seeks it not as the rich gift of God, but who would purchase it by his own work. We speak not peace to him, who rests on the value of a life free from the grosser sins, and, perhaps, adorned by acts of kindness and general usefulness, but, withal, destitute of faith and love to God, or who to this, which most unhappily is misnamed a well spent life, adds just as much of God's mercy and of the atonement of Christ, as shall be required to make up for his frailties, and imperfections. We make no compromise with the unrepenting sinner, or the indifferent, or the self-righteous; we offer to them pardon and mercy as freely as to others, but only if they will give up their delusions, and come, as little children, to Christ and be saved. But to the humble penitent, and to him who feels that he is indeed unworthy and undone, but who is willing, though late, and for the first time, to trust to the atonement of Jesus, and the promise of his

Spirit, we have nothing but encouragement to offer, and if, indeed, he find that he clings, though with feeble faith, and as a new-born child, to the hope of the gospel, and declares that now, he would not for worlds quit even this slender hold, we fear not, and we speak peace with firm confidence, because we know that he seeks it, where he is sure to obtain it, and has believed in the power and the faithfulness of him, who delights to save even the chief of sinners.

XI.

The next class of duties to be enjoined, comprehends truth, honesty, and justice. There are certain virtues or dispositions which we must, intuitively, approve of, in consequence of possessing the knowledge of right and wrong. The duties now to be noticed are of this kind, and are taught from principles implanted in the mind. But, as they may be debased, or counteracted, by selfish considerations, an express command is added, to strengthen them. Every part of the character of God, is for our imitation. A transcript of his moral perfections was given, for the benefit of man, who had lost the image of God, in the human nature of Jesus, whose example we are to follow, both in his sentiments towards God and towards man. We are to follow, not only his love, his submission, his piety, but his truth, justice, and uprightness.

Truth is immutable and fixed. Of the same thing, it cannot be said that it is, and that it is not. The perception or apprehension of truth, is either acquired intuitively or by reasoning, according to the nature of the thing. All belief must proceed from one or other of these sources; and when belief is produced, we are bound, when questioned, to give a correct statement of it. The two duties are very different.

The first, or the obligation to discover the truth, is chiefly a personal duty. The second is relative, and consists in giving a true account of our knowledge. If we do not, we endeavour to misrepresent the truth, making falsehood appear to be truth, inducing a man to believe that to be true which God knoweth to be false. It is, therefore, wilfully making him think differently from God. He who denies the truth, tries to subvert that which God hath established, and in so far as he dislikes the truth, loses his resemblance to God. Viewed with regard to its effects on society, falsehood is most injurious. It occasions erroneous belief, and leads to incredulity. If one man could not believe another, there must be an end of all intercourse, a disregard to all testimony, scepticism respecting every thing which is not an object of our senses. We believe God, because he is truth. Our faith and hope of salvation, rest on the truth of God; and he, who by his conduct, tends to make men doubtful as to testimony and truth, not merely injures the temporal interest of mankind, but paves the way for doubting God himself. The father of lies, began by impeaching the veracity of God, and ruined Adam by saying, Thou shalt not die. In addition to all these considerations, it is to be observed, that in so far as a false assertion leads to action, in the deceived party, the liar is responsible for the action, and his crime is aggravated according to the intention and the effects. After these remarks, I conclude by noticing some of the positive injunctions of God. David, when he inquires, who shall abide in the tabernacle of God? immediately replies, "He that speaketh truth in his heart." Zechariah says, "speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour;" and Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesians, repeats the very words of the prophet. There is a particular species of falsehood, expressly, reprobated

in Scripture, namely, traducing the character of another. David, in answering the important question just alluded to, says, "He that backbiteth not." Paul couples backbiters with haters of God. James says, "Speak not evil one of another." God expressly commands, "Thou shalt not raise a false report;" and declares, "Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off." "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."

Honesty, consists in adhering, inviolably, to every engagement entered into by special agreement, and every obligation arising from the natural relations of men to one another. In the first view, it requires the fulfilment of every promise. In the second, a rigid respect to the property or rights of others. He, who breaks a promise, is not merely false, but adds injustice to falsehood, inasmuch as he refuses to perform that which the other party has acquired a right to exact. Hence, among the wicked, we find, "covenant-breakers"—"truce-breakers." He who encroaches on the rights, or injures, or abstracts, the property of another, infringes on the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." This is not a simple act of injustice, but is injustice conjoined with covetousness and deceit, or rapacity and violence. It always is accompanied with meanness, and the loss of personal honour. Indeed, our word, honesty, is derived from the Latin *honestas*, which comes from honour, and signifies dignity and honour, as well as probity, and certainly came to be used in the latter sense, in consequence of probity constituting moral honour. Honesty and probity, are now used often to denote the same quality; but, perhaps, it is more correct, to apply the term honesty to fairness of dealing, and probity to uprightness of character, and scrupulous regard to truth. Connected with this duty, we must inculcate, the rigid performance of every agreement,

not merely according to the letter, but the spirit of the obligation, and, candour in every transaction, avoiding every quirk and mental reservation. Honesty requires, that every one shall have his due, and that restitution shall be made to him who has been injured. It forbids all fraudulent dealing, extortion, taking advantage of the ignorance or necessity of others, breach of trust, forgery, contracting debt, or neglecting payment, entering into speculations which exceed the capital possessed, endangering the credit of others, or leading them into engagements which must be hurtful or ruinous, withholding what belongs to another on unjust or frivolous pretences, enriching ourselves at the expense of others, or, in any other way, endeavouring to transfer to ourselves, clandestinely and injuriously, the property of another. Besides attending to the act of honesty, we are also to guard against those dispositions and circumstances, which may lead to a violation of this duty ; such as covetousness, inordinate affection for temporal things, indulging in envy at the success or prosperity of others, distracting cares, neglect of those means which provide an honest income. Before dismissing the subject, I may advert to an evil of great magnitude, an extravagant spirit of commercial speculation. The ruin or distress which this has brought on too many families, is so well known, that it requires no proof. The matter can be brought to a very short issue. It is evident, that he who trades greatly beyond his capital, must endanger the property of those who give him credit ; and he has no more right to do this, than he has to endanger their life. By plausibility of story, or false appearance of wealth, he obtains credit. By expensive establishments, he endeavours to sustain it. Day after day he extends his transactions, which at length becomes so intricate that perhaps he himself cannot tell his situation. Diffi-

culties at last arise. These are successively provided for, by new transactions, till, in the natural course of things, a crisis arrives, and friends and strangers meet the same fate, and partake of the same ruin. How far the devastation may extend, or how many families of little children are reduced to beggary, cannot be told. Yet, this man, whose ambition, avarice, or knavery, has spread desolation widely through the land, escapes without punishment, and appears in public without shame, whilst the petty swindler, who cheats his neighbour out of a few shillings, is banished from his country, or perhaps gives up his life as the price of his crime. It has always appeared to me, highly immoral in any man, to trade far beyond his capital, and to support his sinking fortune, by more extensive transactions, of the ultimate issue of which, he must be certain, or at least very apprehensive. An honest man, who has acted according to prudence and a good conscience, may, from inevitable losses, become a bankrupt, and deserves compassion, and usually receives assistance. But, he who has been only gambling with the property of others, deserves the most severe punishment, and were the minds of such men not callous, they would indeed receive it, in the contemplation of the misery they produce. True, indeed, it is, that they who make haste to be rich, fall into many temptations; “for the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

Justice, is a virtue consisting in the desire and determination, to act according to the principles of equity. In many instances, we find the words used to express moral qualities, are merely metaphorical applications, of those employed to denote external conditions, such as straight, clean, crooked. There is a connexion, between the words, justice and

righteousness, in those languages, which have separate words for both, either in their etymology, or in their derivation, from words similar in meaning, though not in sound. This is the case in the Greek ; and in the Latin, righteous can be expressed by *justus*, which signifies exact, completely proportioned, as well as just, hence we say, when one thing is fitted to another, or the union completed, that it is adjusted ; or by *æquus*, level or even ; or by *rectus*, straight or upright. Justice consists in rendering to every being his due, and, therefore, is, in one sense, the same with righteousness. It comprehends our duty to God ; for it is just to love, venerate, trust, adore, and serve him, and is synonymous, with that branch of righteousness, which respects our duties to God. But, in general, we confine the virtue of justice, to our transactions with men, making it the same with that branch of righteousness, which respects our duty to them, and to ourselves as men. It is just to perform every duty to men, which they have a right to claim or expect. It should be recollected by all, that righteousness is justice in its most extensive sense, and that no man can be righteous who is not strictly just. Some may conceive that the word, righteousness, with which they are familiar, is, precisely, the same with the word, religious, to which they affix a very vague meaning, perhaps, making it consist in speculative knowledge, or partial attention to duties and ordinances. But, when we examine the word, and what is better, the principle, we find, that righteousness, is the full, entire, universal performance of every obligation, binding on a human being, the acknowledgment and performance, of every right belonging to another, and even to himself. Perfect righteousness, was exhibited by the Saviour of men, and, through him, alone, is beheld in his followers. At present, we are speaking

of relative duties, and therefore consider righteousness, in that sense, in which it respects our conduct to others, which is generally called justice, and comprehends, speaking the truth, the performance of every duty which another can claim, respecting the property and character of men, and, where we are to be in any degree a judge, determining, conscientiously, the merit of the demands made by each, and what properly belongs to them. It also implies the awarding to every one, the punishment of his crimes, for the benefit of society.

The scriptures every where inculcate justice and truth, and judgments are denounced against those who neglect these duties. Micah, in his prophecies, asks, "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God;" or as it is also translated, "to humble thyself, to walk with thy God." Now to walk with God is to please, and endeavour to resemble him. In the same way Jeremiah says, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, who exerciseth loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things do I delight." If God delight in these things, he must desire that his creatures, who were formed in his image, should delight in them also. Jesus came not to destroy the moral law, or to exonerate men from observing it. Both he and his apostles maintain the necessity of obedience, and the certainty that faith, if it be alive, shall produce good fruit; and all the inspired writers, from the first to the last, urge the obligations of morality, and warn against the consequences of disobedience. Amos, after detailing the oppression, injustice, and dishonesty of the people, proclaims this

solemn truth, "The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, surely I will never forget any of their works." Jeremiah, on the same grounds, declares, from God, "shall I not visit for these things?" Yet, notwithstanding the displeasure of God, against injustice and violence, mercy is promised to the repentant. "If ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour, if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widowed, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt, then will I cause you to dwell in the land, that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever." Hosea also urges to reformation, saying, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you. Ye have ploughed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity, ye have eaten the fruit of lies." If the Christian be called to be a follower of God, to forsake the evil of his ways, and "depart from iniquity," it must be a serious question, for every one, in determining his character, to consider how far he is strictly just and righteous in all his transactions and intentions, and is endeavouring through faith to live soberly, honestly, and godly in this world. If any one live otherwise, he ought, with trembling, to recollect that the time is approaching when he who is unjust must be unjust still.

XII.

The word of God, not only gives direction for the performance of those duties which we owe to all men, as fellow-creatures, but also respecting those, which are peculiar to the relation in which we stand

to one another, as husband and wife, parents and children, masters and servants, magistrates and subjects, pastors and flock. It is not my intention to enter into a minute consideration of these important duties, which would lead me to digest an extensive system of jurisprudence. I shall do little more than mention the general rules contained in the scriptures, leaving it to the reader to follow them out by his own reflection.

The first relation to be considered, is that of husband and wife—that in which Adam and Eve stood, and received the blessing of God. The marriage of one man, to one woman, was expressly appointed by God, and is an engagement which cannot be dissolved, except by the infidelity of one of the parties. Our Saviour, having a reference to the decree of God, expressly says, that the husband and wife are one flesh, and that being joined by God, no man can separate them. The establishment of monogamy is consonant to every rule of policy, and accords with the advantage of society. It prevents those jealousies and feuds, which prevail where polygamy exists. It prevents that dissoluteness of manners, which is met with, where marriage is not regarded, and ensures to the children a degree of attention they could not otherwise obtain. As to the duties peculiar to the marriage state, the first, unquestionably, is fidelity to the marriage vow, the violation of which is repeatedly threatened with the wrath of God. Doubtless, the violation on the part of the wife is more aggravated, on account of the consequences to which it may lead, but the crime, abstractedly, is the same in both parties, and shall receive the same punishment. Another duty is conjugal affection. “Let every one of you, in particular so love his wife, even as himself, and the wife see that she reverence her husband.” “Husbands, love your wives, and be not

bitter against them ;” “ giving honour unto the wife, as the weaker vessel.” “ Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.” The duty of the husband is to love, cherish, comfort, and provide for his wife. The duty of the wife is to love, solace, and encourage her husband, amid his cares and toils, yielding to his authority as given by God. Where there is perfect and mutual love, there will be no desire to exert authority on the one part, no occasion for it on the other. Doubtless, God hath made the wife subject to the husband, and she who resists and disobeys, breaks the command of God. But the husband also hath received an injunction to cherish the wife, and not be bitter against her. He is not to exercise unreasonable, and capricious authority, or to control for the pleasure of receiving obedience. He must give an account for every harsh word, every breach of love, every temptation his conduct may afford, to diminish the love and respect of his wife. Besides these duties, it is binding on both, to promote each other’s progress in religion, and to assist one another in their pilgrimage to that better country, where they hope to dwell. The more perfectly that this duty is performed, the greater will be the advantage of the connexion, and the higher will the happiness be which results from it. Were this practised, we should hear of no unhappy marriages, no domestic quarrels, no indifference or disaffection. Matrimonial misery, results from an imprudent union at first, and the neglect of this duty afterwards. Those, who are “ unequally yoked together,” who have chosen a partner for life, without religion, must not be disappointed if marriage should prove unhappy. Those who marry from the impulse of a transient passion, or from motives of interest, must not wonder that marriage does not realize their expectations of hap-

piness. He who marries for money has no cause to complain, if he obtain nothing else. He who marries a woman without education, or, what is worse, without common sense, must not be surprised, if, instead of a comfort, he meet only with a trial of his patience. In a matter which so nearly concerns the temporal happiness or misery of a man, and on the same principle of a woman, it behoves him to think seriously before he enter into an engagement, and to be well acquainted with the temper, disposition, habits, and endowments of his proposed partner. Personal attraction, and money, the two most powerful recommendations, with many, are the two least of all to be depended on for comfort, and to a man of feeling and education, never can compensate for want of information, deficiency of intellect or prudence, bad temper, a trifling or dissipated mind, or want of affection, not to mention ignorance of Christianity. It is possible for two ignorant people to live comfortably together, but all marriages where there is a great inequality, in any one respect, whether in mind, or in rank, or in fortune, must be hazardous. These considerations, ought to weigh, with both sexes. I need not add, the indispensable duty, of being able to support a family, before any matrimonial engagement be entered into.

That union, which takes place, from love and solid attachment, between parties of piety, of similar dispositions and accordant habits, bids fair, to be productive of the greatest earthly happiness, conferred on man. To describe those tender assiduities, that warm and cordial affection, by which connubial happiness is kept up and nourished, that kind attention and delicate respect, by which love is strengthened, belongs rather to the poet than the moralist. I only introduce the subject, that I may have an opportunity of impressing it, more firmly, on the mind of those,

who require it to be impressed, that should love decline, there is no surer way of extinguishing it altogether, and producing daily misery, than apparent indifference, neglect, or disrespect ; as for cruelty and insult, I will not permit myself to suppose that any man of feeling, far less of Christianity, could ever meditate, not to say practise them toward his wife. Let those whom providence hath blessed in marriage, enjoy with gratitude the precious gift, not knowing how soon it may be recalled ; above all, let them urge each other to that faith in Christ, that love to God, which alone can crown their happiness here, and make them happy hereafter. Let those whom a wise and merciful God, hath been pleased to afflict, by the dissolution of this union, look back, with thankfulness, on the happiness they have enjoyed, and, whilst they endeavour to improve the dispensation, let them also take comfort from the consoling, the enlivening, the glorious hope, of soon renewing their felicity, in a land, where there is no more sin, no more affliction, where Jesus communicates joy and love, and where this night of sorrow shall appear, but as a short vision, dispelled by the brightness of the Son of God.

XIII.

Parents are to love their children, maintain them, during their age of helplessness, make provision for their wants, restrain their follies or vices, correct their faults, encourage them in what is good, educate them according to their abilities, benefit them by their example, and, above all, instruct them in religious knowledge, and pray both for them, and with them. On the one hand, they are not to indulge them in idleness, passion, or vice, but must, if necessity require, have recourse to the painful task of correction,

for "he that spareth the rod hateth the child." On the other hand, harshness and severity, are injurious and unchristian: "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

That parents should love their children, is a law of nature, unfelt, only, by the worthless and insensible. This love, watches over their infancy, with care and tenderness, takes a lively interest in their childish sports, rejoices in their amusement, exults in their improvement, guards their health, relieves their little wants, and strives to procure them every comfort. This love, is more apt to lead to foolish indulgence, than to severe discipline, and there is more resolution required, to check a fault, than gratify a desire. There is a duty more important, than even the imperative obligation of preserving the health, and providing for the wants of children—the cultivation of the mind, and instruction in that salvation, which so deeply interests both young and old. I shall not enter into any system of rules for improving the mind, or lay down any plan of education, because, this, to be beneficial, would lead me far beyond my limits. But I may, with some advantage, introduce the following remarks. *First*, A parent, ought to give his child as good and extensive an education as he can, and begin as early as possible. *Second*, He is to attend, carefully, to the government of the passions. These, very early appear and begin to act, and much of the happiness or misery of life, depends on this early regulation. Even in the nursery, the moral constitution is formed. How melancholy to see a spirit of cruelty, revenge, pride and anger, not merely suffered, but fomented and encouraged! Let those who value the peace of their children, do their utmost to cultivate a spirit of love, gentleness, patience, humanity, cheerfulness, mildness, and humility. Let

them bring up their children, in a spirit of obedience, with dutiful respect to their superiors, an abhorrence of cruelty and falsehood, an inviolable attachment to truth and honour, and in the constant exercise of candour, brotherly love, and liberality. How early, the virtues may begin to be taught, is best known, by observing, how soon, the vices may be acquired. Were the moral education of children diligently, early, and universally attended to, and conducted on the principles of Christianity, the next generation would exhibit, what has been long desired, a race of happy men, full of mercy, speaking truth one to another, dwelling in the spirit of love, and zealous for the glory of God. These exertions, may be neglected, because they are not expected to be universal. But let every parent reflect, that he, as an individual, is bound to do his duty to society, and that, even, if no other man should bring up his children seriously, yet, he shall derive the blessing of his own labours, and may hope, under Providence, to make his sons and his daughters happy in this life, and happy during the ages of eternity. *Third*, He is to give his children early habits of attention, and make them regularly exercise the powers of the mind. Much injury is done, I believe, by the indolence of parents in this respect. It is not enough to appoint a task or give out a lesson to be learned. A child, if he understand it and be naturally diligent, will, doubtless, perform his task, but no credit belongs to the parent. In general, I fear that too much reliance is placed on the effect of tasking, and that it often confirms the very habit we wish to avoid or remedy. A child, if set to a task he does not fully understand, or which is too long, gives it up in despair; in the first case, his intellect is not sufficient, in the second, his strength and application are inadequate. He must understand what he is doing, and must be as-

sisted according to his necessity. Neither is an indolent child to be left by himself, to any task or lesson, however short or plain. If he be not allowed to amuse himself actively, he will at least remain idle, with the mind unemployed. He must be watched, and assisted, and every mean used to keep the mind fixed on the subject. If, for instance, he be to commit some verses to memory, if he won't do this by spontaneous exertion, he is not to be kept all day shut up, to make him do so, but must be made to read aloud the verses time after time, as he would have gone over them with his eye, had he been, silently, endeavouring to commit them to memory. There is nothing more dangerous, than to leave the mind to indulge in idleness, in reveries distant from the present purpose, and, therefore, every exertion must be made to give activity. The hope of reward, the fear of punishment, the gratification of curiosity, the union of the teacher and scholar in the task, must all be tried, and in the trials, which must vary according to circumstances, it is to be carefully remembered, that if a remedy do not operate soon, it is vain to trust to a perseverance in that alone. As an encouragement, it is to be considered, that every successful effort, makes the next easier, both to the teacher and the pupil.

But the most important part of education, is the communication of religious knowledge, and the cultivation of religious principles. It has been said, that it is wrong to instruct children in religion, till they be capable of judging of the truth, or falsehood of the doctrines, and able easily to comprehend them. But this objection has never been urged, except by the ignorant, or the infidel part of mankind. Train up a child in the way in which he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it, is the opinion of a better judge, than most of our modern

philosophers. If we were to act on this principle in all things, and why in religion, if not in other departments of knowledge, we should keep the mind ignorant, and find the old man still a child. It is scarcely possible to begin religious instruction too soon, and we have very excellent summaries of knowledge in our hands, particularly the valuable collection of Catechisms, published by Dr Watts, of which it is impossible to speak too highly. It contains an introduction to the word of God, as plain and as useful as could be accomplished by human powers; and for the benefit of those more advanced, it comprehends likewise, the Shorter Catechism of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, a most admirable system of religious knowledge, drawn from the scriptures, the best compendium of divinity, both for young and old, to be met with, and which I earnestly recommend to every family.

It is farther the duty of every parent to pray earnestly and frequently to God, for the temporal and spiritual good of his children, and to implore the Divine blessing, upon the means of instruction, and, that the grace of God, which brought salvation, may be extended to them, through Jesus. He will make it his frequent employment to talk to them of the love of God and Jesus Christ, and endeavour to fix in their minds, the power, and desire, of Christ to save sinners, even little children. Children must be saved by the cross, as well as those, who, from original sin, have brought forth many transgressions. But Jesus loved little children, and desired them to be brought unto him, and he will take them to himself in heaven. How dreadful, then, the responsibility of a parent, and how bitter his reflections, if one of his children shall have died without being made acquainted with this Saviour. Children can early be made to love their benefactor, and many

young children have loved Christ, who loved them. It will be the care of every good parent, to make his children pray to God, morning and evening, and to impress them, with the recollection, that he sees them through the day, and watches over them during their sleep. He will be careful to set a good example before them, and by his precept and instruction, make them well acquainted with religion. He will early introduce them to a knowledge of the Scriptures, and make them be read frequently. He will store the memory with select passages, and in infancy will make use of hymns and psalms. He will be careful what books are read, for many encourage bad principles, or vicious passions, and give rise to foolish fears. He will also be watchful what companions his children keep, for much idleness, and many sins, may be the consequence of inattention in this respect. I allude not merely to the moral, but also to the intellectual qualities of intimate associates, for folly is contagious. He will do well, to keep his children much under his own eye, and will weigh the arguments carefully, before he enter into the prevailing system, of sending them from home, and placing them under the care of those, whose avowed object is to make money. I have never been able to discover why boys, whose parents reside in a large town, cannot be taught as well at home, as by being sent to a kind of juvenile barracks at a distance : or, why girls may not more beneficially, and as economically, be taught, both the useful and ornamental branches of education, by a governess at home, as by being sent off to a fashionable boarding school. Neither can I satisfy myself why every female, however the rank may differ, is to be taught the same accomplishments, as they are called, whether she may have a taste for, or a capability of acquiring them or not. How much wiser are those, who accommodate the education, to

the sphere in which a daughter is to move, and improve her mind by history and polite literature, rather than by the flimsy lessons of a fashionable school. A mind naturally weak, may, by steady discipline, attain a rank in the intellectual, as well as in the moral scale, and a respectability in society higher far, than can be acquired by mere talent, uncontrolled or ill directed. Sense is a good substitute for taste. Pitable is that training of children, which leads only to the frittering down of the morning, with visitors as frivolous as themselves, and the dedication of the evening to mere amusement. Yet such is the case of multitudes living for immortality, and of whose days and hours, an account must be given. Farther, a parent will give his children early habits of attending at church, and sanctifying the Sabbath-day ; and when the mind is sufficiently informed, and his children have arrived at the years of discretion, he will use his strenuous endeavours to make them regularly obey the dying request of Jesus, and remember him, in the sacrament which he instituted.

The responsibility of parents, is indeed momentous, and, perhaps, can never in this life be more truly and more bitterly felt, than by him, who, during a period of indifference, has neglected the instruction of his children, in the religion of Jesus, and seen one after another, taken thence, without consideration, and without preparation, and has consigned a whole family to the tomb, without one thought as to their future state. But the hand of God, may at length have taken hold of him, and the Spirit of God, may have, in mercy, awakened such a one from his sleep ; and then, amidst all the fears and terrors for the safety of his own soul, there riseth up the agonising reflection, that by his carelessness, the souls of those whom he loved with all the fondness of parental affection, have been allowed to live without God,

and without hope in the world, and may, for aught he can tell, be now in that place, where there is neither repentance, nor the means of grace. Or, should parent and child be swept off, suddenly, by one common desolation, in the midst of their thoughtlessness and indifference, who can tell the aggravated torment, which must arise, from the unceasing accusations of children, brought to this overwhelming destruction, by the carelessness of a parent.

Before dismissing this subject, I may just advert, to the advice to be given by a parent, to his children, in the choice of a profession, and in the prospect of marriage. In both of these, let him be actuated by a desire for the solid happiness, and eternal benefit of his children. Let no prospect of temporal prosperity, no temptation of riches, or honour, ever lead to the recommendation of any plan which might ruin or even endanger the spiritual hopes of his children.

I need scarcely add, that the duties of parents, become binding on the guardians of those, whom Providence has seen fit to render orphans; nor have they any cause to fear, that their performance, of this sacred office, shall pass unrewarded.

The duty of children to their parents, is summed up in the fifth commandment; and in the New Testament, the obligation to obedience is repeatedly set forth. Immediate, and complete, obedience to the command, or known desire of a parent, is the duty of a child. Respect and honour, are the proper sentiments to be maintained, and that grateful, affectionate regard, called filial piety, is the natural feeling of every dutiful son. Nature, independently of the revealed word of God, must influence those, who are not sunk in depravity, to love their parents. The tender care, with which they watched over our infancy, the daily comforts they bestowed, the anxieties they have felt, the assistance they have afforded,

perhaps, their painful labours to bring us to the age of independence, must strongly tend to strengthen, and confirm, that regard, which would naturally be felt, from the mere circumstance, of living with them, from the commencement of our recollection. Besides all this, nature hath implanted in the human mind, as simple and original passions, wholly independent of gratitude, or any selfish and personal considerations, those strong feelings, constituting parental, filial or conjugal love. During infancy and youth, a son must submit, without reserve, to the judgment of his parents ; because, he is not to be supposed capable of judging for himself. Arrived at manhood, respect and obedience are still his duties, but he has also acquired other duties, in consequence of his situation in society ; or, by entering into the married state, he has become the head of a new family. The unconditional control of the parent now ceases, for others claim a right to particular duties, and his authority is not meant to be exerted against the matured judgment of the son, in matters where others are also interested. But, although this be the case, yet, no age exempts a man from honouring his parent, listening with deference to his opinion, and yielding obedience to all lawful commands, that is, all commands, which do not infringe on the duties he owes to others. And when old age, or sickness, comes upon his parent, it is his duty, as it certainly will be his inclination, to comfort, support, and relieve him. What love, what care, what tenderness, can repay the unceasing anxiety, the fostering attention, the incessant watchfulness, the indulgence, the instruction, the pious advices of a parent. Who can recollect the morning of his life, the days of his youth, the comforts of his father's home, without gratitude and love, without a tender respect for his memory, if he be no more, a strong, and uniform, sentiment of filial piety, if he

still exist. Nor is it to a father alone that this love is due; happy are they who have experienced a mother's care—a care, of peculiar, of inexpressible value in infancy, an endearing fondness which filial duty cannot repay.

XIV.

The duties of masters and servants, are laid down by Paul. "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven," "forbearing threatening, knowing that your Master is in heaven; neither is there any respect of persons with him." It is the duty of masters, to be kind and gentle to their servants, not to oppress them, or exact more than they can give; to pay them, faithfully, just wages; to treat them exactly as they would, themselves, wish to be treated, were they in the same situation; and to give them religious instruction, and watch over their moral conduct. Those, who are harsh, passionate, or peevish, who are hard taskmasters, proud, and contemptuous, unjust in their conduct, are admonished to remember, that they also have a Master in heaven. They are called to treat servants, as members of the family, to comfort their dependent situation with kindness, and to improve them by instruction. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ. Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but, as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will, doing service as to the Lord, and not to man;" "be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." It is the duty of servants to fulfil every lawful command, to attend to every order, to be faithful and honest, respectful and obliging. Those who loiter their time, who

neglect their duties, who injure their master's property, and do not promote his interest, are dishonest, and break the command of God. A servant, who engages to do that, which he knows he cannot do, who wastes what is intrusted to him, who gives away, that, which he is not permitted to give, who does not conscientiously perform his duty, as he would wish it to be done to him, were he a master, is not actuated by a spirit, either of honour, or of Christianity.

XV.

The duty of magistrates and rulers, is to govern according to the natural principles of equity, and the special laws of the realm. Men in society have certain rights, which none may wantonly deprive them of. Life, liberty, and property, are secured to every man, by the natural principles of justice, but may be forfeited, by transgressing those general and universal laws, which are founded on morality, or by infringing those peculiar statutes, which a society has framed, for its preservation and welfare. The duty of rulers, may be comprehended in obeying themselves, and making others obey these laws, whether general or special, in deciding justly between man and man according to these rules, and in directing the resources of the state, to the civil and religious prosperity of the community. They are vested with a power, more or less uncontrolled, according to the constitution of the society, of modifying special laws, according to the exigencies of the times, provided these variations are never contrary to the fundamental principles of equity, and the interest of religion. The welfare of the community, and the preservation of the constitution, are the trusts vested in the government. Governors are not to violate fundamental

laws, or abridge the national liberty ; still less are they on the other hand, to permit that misrule which is not freedom, but licentiousness. They are not to interfere with the religion of individuals, but are to allow every man to worship God, according to the dictates of his conscience. At the same time, should the opinions and principles of any class of men, be hostile to the constitution of the country, it is their duty, whilst they permit the exercise of their religion, to prevent by interposition, the means of carrying such principles into practice. They are not to make war unnecessarily, or in any respect to do that which, were they subjects, they would disapprove of, and, consequently, never can sanction any measure, which is to be more for their own advantage than that of the people. They are to be careful to avoid, whatever can lessen the good opinion of the people, or, justly, diminish their attachment. They are faithfully to do justice, in all things, and to all men, that they may be a terror to evil-doers, but for the praise of them that do well. Above all, they are to watch over and defend the national religion, for it is piety which exalteth a nation, and, as a most essential duty, are to prevent the dissemination of works, subversive of morality and Christianity. They are to favour the cause of God, repress vice, and set a good example to the people ; showing, by their conduct, that they fear God, and endeavour to resemble him. Christians, in all things, are to be followers of God, and christian rulers are to follow Him, in their spirit of ruling, as well as in their private life. They must remember the awful responsibility, which rests on them, to promote faithfully, and correctly, and unremittingly, the interest of religion. For all history, whether ancient or modern, confirms the declaration of him, whose word is truth, and whose power is omnipotent, that as certainly as religion

decays in any nation, so surely shall that nation sink, or, if very wicked, totally perish. "Behold, the eyes of the Lord are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth, saving, that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord." There is only exception then, from the full extent of this punishment, and that is in favour of the Jews, who, after the period of their calamities is over, shall yet be re-established as a kingdom, probably the most influential in the world.

Obedience, respect, and support, are the duties subjects owe to the government, and to the laws. Society cannot subsist without government, which is an institution of God, and as such, demands respect and support. The powers that be are appointed of God; and Peter expressly says, that governors are sent by him. Christians, therefore, when they are commanded to fear God, are likewise enjoined to honour the king, and respect their rulers. It is a most ignorant mistake to suppose, that a man is at liberty to do what he pleases. In a desert, he may enjoy this liberty, but, whenever he enters into society, he joins those who have equal liberty with himself, and, therefore, it becomes necessary, for the good of the whole, that each be restrained, from injuring his neighbour, either by his actions or omissions. All restraint indeed, beyond this, is despotic; but there is no despotism, in preventing a man from robbing or killing his neighbour—from wronging or slandering him—from endeavouring to subvert the constitution of the society to which he belongs, or to destroy the religious establishment of his country. There is no despotism in making every man contribute, to bear the burden of the community, or obliging him to obey those laws, which have been devised, and enacted, for the benefit of all. Liberty, in society, never can exist, at the expense of justice

and morality. God hath, by his own laws, prevented men from doing whatever they please, and from following all the imaginations of their hearts, and no man can pretend to unconditional liberty, without sweeping away moral laws, relating both to God and man.

A Christian always obeys and respects the laws, honours his rulers, and gives a cordial support to his country, and its constitution. No selfish motives, no private considerations, will lead him to weaken the attachment of others, by seditious or inflammatory expressions, by exaggerating the faults, or misrepresenting the misfortunes, of government, by decrying its merit, or slandering its intentions. When he is firmly persuaded that government is wrong, he will, if his situation in life call for it, express his sentiments, with candour and independence; but he must do so, from his conscience, purely, for the good of his country, and without any sinister motives. Let those who endeavour to spread a spirit of discontent, seriously reflect on the anarchy and horrors, attendant on the dissolution of the bands of society, and, on their responsibility, for all the bloodshed and misery, which may be produced.

XVI.

The ministers of God, and their flock, are connected by a spiritual tie. To the pastor is committed, the preaching of the everlasting word, and the instruction of the people in the means of salvation. He is responsible for the consequences, and God, himself, hath solemnly declared, that he will require the souls of his flock at his hand. He undertakes a very dangerous office, and will do well to consider the consequences. He is a minister of Christ, a successor of the apostles, and if he preach

any other doctrine than they preached, it is at his peril. He is to show men their natural state, to convince them of their guilt, and lead them to that Saviour, who alone can redeem them. Cold themes of morality can do little good in any respect, but none at all in rousing sinners, and bringing them to the fountain, opened for sin and pollution. The duty of a clergyman is, to make himself well acquainted with the word of God, to pray for the aid of the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, to satisfy himself how his own soul is to be saved, and to recommend that method to others, which he himself is honestly resolved to trust to, for his own salvation. He is neither to preach a dead faith, nor the efficacy of works, but a living faith, and the fruit, which proves that Christ dwells in the soul. His first and only object is to save sinners, for that was the object of his Master, and he is to do so by bringing them to him. He must earnestly endeavour to convince men, that they require a Saviour, for, if they do not, surely the Son of God had not consented to die for them, and, he must show them, that Jesus is the only Saviour, the way, the truth, and the life. If he feel not this himself, he cannot teach others; if he do, he will enforce the doctrine of the cross. Let him diligently, studiously, and with fervent prayer, prepare his exhortations and discourses, and let him preach them earnestly and plainly. I can conceive no greater mark of folly, and a weak judgment, as well as a cold heart, than a man bestowing all his attention, to what may be called stage effect. How miserably, in general, do these orators fail. Their affectation, their attempts at sublimity, at pathos, at action, excite the pity of every man of taste. He who is aware of the importance of his subject, never can have his attention fixed on attitudes, and modulation of the voice. He who mounts the pulpit, to preach

Jesus Christ, loses all thought of himself. He goes not there to exhibit himself. He goes to call sinners to salvation, to preach repentance and remission of sins, through the infinite mercy of God, and the atonement of Jesus Christ; to call them from the vanities of time, to the glories of eternity. On these subjects he must have eloquence, he must speak with the force of truth. As he feels himself, he must make others feel also, and as Paul, when he reasoned, made Felix tremble, so, will he make his hearers listen with interest, to that important doctrine, which comes from God himself. He will so blend doctrine with practice, that the connexion, of the one with the other, may never be forgotten. Whilst he constantly maintains Christ to be the vine, he will also uniformly prove, that those who abide in him, must bring forth fruit. He will not be satisfied with preaching the gospel in the pulpit, but will be careful to discharge all the other duties of his office. He will visit the sick, instruct the ignorant, encourage the weak, comfort the afflicted, excite the faithful, relieve the poor, and set, in himself, an example of love to God, love to men, faith in Christ. He will study the word of God diligently, that he may well understand it, and he will pray for the blessing of God on all his labours. I know not language, sufficiently powerful, to express the value of a christian ministry. The most elevated flight of the imagination cannot reach, far less surmount, the high, and the responsible station, of one of the humblest ministers of Christ. He is sent in Christ's stead: awful thought! He is sent, as a special messenger, from Him who died for the sins of men. He is sent with the promise of an accompanying Spirit. He is ordained to promulgate the glad tidings of salvation to the guilty, to cheer and comfort the drooping soul, to instruct the ignorant, to plead with the

impenitent and careless, and to confirm, and build up in the faith, the chosen people of God. Coming in the name of Christ, he says, and he ought to feel the force of what he says, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me." The commission is from Jesus himself, and the subject of the message is, that this same Jesus died to save sinners. In the contemplation of the greatness of the subject, and the awful responsibility which devolves upon him, it is not surprising that the mind should, for a time, sink under the apprehension, that no man is sufficient for these things. But the promise of the Spirit comes to his aid, and in proportion to the illumination of that Spirit, and the grace given to behold the mystery of reconciliation, will be the earnestness of his labour, and, from morning to night, from the beginning to the end of each successive year, he will point, with unceasing solicitation, to the cross of Christ. Jesus, in all his love, his obedience, his sufferings, and his free grace, must be the perpetual end, and object, of his ministration. To the learned and the ignorant, to the careless and the awakened, to the impenitent and the godly, he calls alike, in the name of his Master, to come and behold the glories of salvation. His whole soul, is devoted, to the cause of Him who hath called him—he knows not how to do enough for his crucified Redeemer—he knows not where to stop, when he offers a full and a free deliverance—he is checked, not by worldly thoughts or weakness of body, but rather overpowered, in his utterance, by the intensity of that love and rich mercy, he is the honoured instrument of declaring—he feels that life is too short, that his powers and his strength are too feeble, to enable him to do, for the sake of one immortal soul, what the interest of multitudes requires at his hands. His public service, and his ministration from house to house, in the season of

dangerous gladness, and in the days of adversity, are indeed a transcript, however faint in impression, of the life and conduct, of our Saviour on earth.

If such be the character of a christian minister, what ought to be the rejoicing of a christian people? Ought they not to prize, above all things, this precious gift of God, and give, to this man of apostolic labour, all the spiritual encouragement, and affectionate support in their power? Happy are they who are indulged with this precious blessing, and long may they enjoy it. But a time may come, when, from various causes, they may be deprived of it, and then one consolation remains, that in the day of mercy and of favour, they did not neglect, or undervalue, the blessing they enjoyed.

It is the duty of the flock to esteem their pastor, to encourage him in his work, to aid him in his endeavour to promote the success of the gospel, to respect and honour him, as having the rule over them, to supply his wants freely, to be charitable to his failings, not given to censure, diligent in the improvement of the blessings they enjoy under his ministry, and to join with him in prayer, and in active endeavours for the reformation of manners, the propagation of the gospel, and the advancement of the kingdom of Christ.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE DUTIES MAN OWES TO GOD.

I.

THE first duty we owe to God, is to become acquainted with him, to listen to his revelation, and learn his promises. The solemn admonition, given by a dying father to a son, whom he left in a land surrounded by the worshippers of idols, was this, "Thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee, but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off."

Unless we know God, and his attributes, and his statutes, we cannot afford a reasonable service, nor be acquainted with the ground, on which we are to love him. Paul, on this principle, asks, "How shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard?" but immediately inquires, "Have they not heard?" "Yes, verily," he replies, "their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the earth." The answer, is a quotation, from the nineteenth Psalm, in which the heavens are said to declare the glory of God. The universe, proclaims his being and perfections, and the consciences of men, admit the knowledge of his existence and law. The preachers also have, as represented by this metaphor, gone through the earth, and proclaimed

the knowledge of God. The heart of man, admits the existence of a God, and teaches him a moral law, more or less perfect. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, insists on two points; namely, that the works of God are manifest to all men, by which they might discover him; and, that, amongst the Gentiles, there was a law written in their heart, by which the conscience, either approved, or condemned their conduct. Moses, after rehearsing to the children of Israel, the conduct of God towards them, and reciting his law, promises blessings to those who observe it, for, says he, the commandment, which I command thee this day, is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, neither is it beyond the sea, but it is nigh unto thee, in thy heart. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, adverts to this passage, after testifying of the Jews, that they had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge, and this want of knowledge, which they might have supplied, led them to seek to establish their own righteousness, instead of that which is of God. The righteousness of the law, says Paul, is this, "The man, that doeth these things, shall live by them." But neither Jew nor Gentile, could do these things, and, therefore, could not live by the law. "The righteousness, which is of faith, speaketh in this way; say not, who shall ascend to heaven, to bring down Christ, or descend, to bring him from the dead, but the word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth, and believe in thy heart in Jesus, thou shalt be saved." There is, therefore, no excuse for not knowing God, and what is required by him for salvation, for he hath revealed himself, and his offer of redemption, so plainly, that all who hear may know; and he who refuseth or neglecteth to listen, is contemptuous towards God, and most unjust, and unwise, toward himself. The

consequence of this conduct, with regard to individuals, in a christian country, must be an indifference to every thing which is good, perhaps Atheism, and all its dreadful effects. To a nation at large, the consequences must be the same as those, which befell the descendents of Noah, a degeneration into idolatry or infidelity. Paul, tells the Romans, that because when men knew God, but glorified him not as God, and did not like to retain him in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind. The same must be the case with all nations and individuals, who disregard the knowledge of God.

We have a much more clear, and complete revelation, than was possessed by the Patriarchs and the Jews of old, and, therefore, it still more becomes us, to discover the perfections, and believe the promises, of God. He revealed himself to the Patriarchs, as the Almighty God, the God of their fathers, but to their descendents, in the days of Moses, he revealed himself as Jehovah. To us, he is more clearly known, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Redeemer and Sanctifier of his people. If God hath condescended to give a revelation to man, it becomes man to hear it, and make himself acquainted with it. It is a duty he owes to himself, as well as to God, for his happiness is interested in it. The power, wisdom, and goodness of God, are manifested by his works, which man is to behold, as a volume of instruction. But he is, especially, to make himself acquainted with the revealed word, and the offer of salvation in the gospel. No man, therefore, performs his duty to God, nor to himself, who does not diligently study the scriptures, with a candid mind, and earnest prayer, for that influence of the Spirit, which is promised for the instruction of the ignorant. The Scriptures inform man, as fully as he can com-

prehend, of the nature of God, of his attributes and perfections, of what he requires of man, and intends to do with him. They give clear prospects of futurity, and discover the fountain of everlasting life. We are not to worship an unknown God, to serve a varying master, to obey a changeable law, to trust to an indefinite promise, to a doubtful protector, or to hope for an uncertain inheritance. All that we require to know, is clearly and fully unfolded to us, all that we can desire, more, indeed, than we can conceive, has been done for us, all that we hope for, is firmly secured; mercy and justice have met together; death hath been abolished, its sting destroyed, and the glory of immortal life, hath been made sure to man.

From the Scriptures, we learn that God is a spirit, invisible to mortal eyes, eternal, immortal, omnipresent, and omniscient; most holy, most just, and true, most wise, most perfect, free, and absolute, almighty, and without change; infinite in love, grace, mercy, long-suffering, and faithfulness; just and terrible in his judgment, and infinite in his hatred to sin. He hath in himself, all glory, goodness, and felicity, and needeth nothing from his creatures, seeing he giveth to all life, and is himself the source of every perfection, and of all happiness. He is holy and wise in his counsels, in his works, and in his commandments, and to him are due, from every creature, praise and love, trust, and obedience.

There are three persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are the same in substance, and equal in power and glory; the Son, begotten from all eternity by the Father; the Spirit, proceeding from all eternity from the Father and the Son; three divine persons, but one God.

From our relation to God, we are, in this world, led to behold him, chiefly, in the works of creation

and redemption, and in the circumstances connected with these. Other beings, and we ourselves, hereafter, may, perhaps, have additional views of the glory, power, and goodness of God, but at present, our conceptions of him, and of his attributes and perfections, are intimately connected with these works.

We view the Father, as planning the work of creation and redemption, as giving the Son for a sacrifice, accepting of his obedience and atonement, and giving to him, as a people, those who are elect, according to his foreknowledge, that they may be adopted, justified, and sanctified.

We view the Son, as creating and redeeming, as uniting himself to a human soul, taking a human body, bearing the punishment of sinners, substituting his righteousness in their behalf, acting as a prophet, priest, and king, to the people he hath purchased; sending forth his Spirit unto them, and continually interceding for them, until he receives them into the place which he hath prepared for them, where their souls shall be kept in happiness, until the end of the world, when, in the great day of judgment, he will raise their bodies, fashion them like his own, and reunite their souls unto them.

We view the Spirit, as enlightening the mind, working repentance and faith in the elect, sanctifying, comforting, and preserving them, by dwelling in them, as the Spirit of Christ. Saints, then, are called, adopted, justified, and sanctified by the Trinity, the Spirit being, with regard to them, the active power; the Son, the mean by which all blessing is procured; and the Father, the source whence proceeds every good and perfect gift.

God hath communicated to man, a knowledge of his existence and character, by his works, but especially by his revealed word. From these sources, all may discover the perfections of God, and all are

bound to obtain this knowledge. We were created in the likeness of God, and formed to obey his will. His character, of moral perfection, ought to be ours. The foundation of all the safety of us sinners, is the discovery how unlike we are to God, how holy he is, and how sinful we are. Till this truth be felt, we can have no active desire for salvation. It is the first step in conversion. What is it which terrifies a sinner in the approach of death, but the prospect of appearing before God, whom he now discovers to be infinite in holiness, and in his abhorrence of sin. This was the character of God from all eternity, but he never till now feelingly knew it. Was it, however, less his duty to have discovered it sooner? was not the word of God put into his hands? was not the gospel preached to him? was it not daily in his power to learn, ere it was too late, that God is holy, and cannot behold iniquity? A knowledge of God, is the foundation of religion, and must drive the sinner to a Redeemer. A cold assent to the perfections, and character, of God, is of no use, for many give their assent with the judgment, but fix the affection and attention, on the sinful pleasures of the world, or, keep the heart wrapped up in indolence and carelessness, as if the truth interested all but themselves. Till the Spirit of God enlighten the mind, and touch the heart, there can be no lively and permanent feeling of the divine greatness, no just perception of the character of God. Of a truth Jesus said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

II.

When we know the word of God, we must believe it; when we learn his offers and his promises, we

must accept of them, and trust to them. Knowledge without belief, or faith, is useless. The knowledge of that which is applicable only to others, however important and even useful to them, can at the most, produce in us, only feelings and sympathies, the mere offspring of the imagination. In the same way that knowledge, which we conceive to be only remotely essential to ourselves, does by that very conception of the remoteness of our interest, affect us, nearly in the same way as if related altogether to others. And thus it is, that the threatenings of God are disregarded, and his promises lightly esteemed, and the belief, both of the one and the other, is productive of no immediate and determined change of purpose. There is neither fear nor hope, but a mere speculative assent to truth, which cannot be denied, usurps the place of that keen and feeling faith, which lays hold, both of the terrors and the mercy of God, and applies them instantly to the heart and the conduct, so as, by the grace of God, to change and to influence the one and the other. An admission of the truth, without a reliance on it, and a cordial acquiescence in it, is no better than the belief of devils. What is faith, but a firm and active belief in the whole revelation, and in every declaration, and in all the promises of God? What was the faith of Abraham but a reliance on the security of God, on his promise of protection here, and of a deliverance by the Messiah, whose day he saw afar off? What was the faith of all the patriarchs, but a firm belief in the promise of God, and what were their sacrifices, but testimonies of their faith? In the epistle to the Hebrews, we have the faith of those saints of old, set forth from the days of Abel, who, by faith, offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain; and are reminded of Enoch, who believing that God lived, and was a rewarder of those who diligently seek him, was by faith trans-

lated; of Noah, who believed God, and constructed an ark of salvation from the flood; of Abraham, who, when called, went, not knowing whither he went, and gave an additional proof of his faith, in being willing to sacrifice Isaac; of Jacob, Joseph, Moses; of David, Samuel, and the Prophets. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, God having provided or foreseen "some better things for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." The great promise has now been fulfilled. Jesus hath come and paid the price of redemption. But still there is occasion for faith. If the Patriarch had faith in a Saviour, who was to arise, we are to have faith in a Saviour who hath arisen. We must believe that Jesus, who was crucified on Mount Calvary, is, indeed, the Son of God, and the Saviour of men, that he died for our offences, and rose again for our justification; that he ever liveth as our Mediator with God, presenting his sufferings and righteousness in our behalf; that, as a Redeemer, he is accepted by God the Father, and is both able and willing to save sinners, to communicate the Holy Spirit for our sanctification, and to receive us into the kingdom of God, where we shall be safe. We must believe, that, through Christ, all our many sins are forgiven, that in him we are made complete, that all things here shall work for good, and that, finally, we shall triumph over death, and be admitted into heaven. Faith is founded on the veracity of God, on his power, on his mercy, and on his justice. He who believes that he is a perfect being, must have faith in his promises. He who believes that Jesus is a Saviour, must, from the same source of belief, have faith in him as a perfect Saviour. Faith, which is represented as the gift of God, embraces every part of religious knowledge, a dependence on the grace of God, a belief in his salvation, and a trust in his pro-

vidence. Some, from different causes, may trust in the providence of God, without believing in his plan of redemption. But a Christian cannot believe one part, and not the whole. Whilst he believes that Jesus can and will save him, he believes, also, that he watches over him, and guards him with his providence; and, on the other hand, whilst he relies on his providence, he depends also on his grace. Faith is justly considered, as the basis of every good affection, as the root of Christianity. He who believes that he is saved by the propitiation of Christ, must love God, and he who loves must obey. That faith, is dead, which worketh not by love, and that faith is indeed imperfect, which leads to the belief of one promise, and a doubt of the fulfilment of others.

III.

Love to God is a consequence of knowing him, and believing in him. The natural, unsanctified, state of man is enmity, rather than love to God, for he does not perceive or discern his goodness. Whatever his knowledge may be, he neither fears nor loves God in a lively manner. But, whenever he is quickened and enlightened, he sees God as he is; he loves him on account of his perfections, or for his own sake; he loves him for the kindness of his providence, and of his temporal mercies; he loves him for his unspeakable gift, Jesus Christ; for the forgiveness of sin, and the hope of glory. It is possible that a man may, from a strong and lively sense, of the temporal mercies of God, feel grateful, but the feeling is partial and temporary, rising and falling, existing and ceasing, with his views of the goodness of Providence. He may, likewise, contemplate the character and perfection of God, and think that he

loves him, but the sentiment is rather approbation than love. But when he views God, as forgiving his sins on account of the atonement made by his own Son, when he reflects on the greatness of the sacrifice, on the extent of the salvation, and feels himself a partaker of this grace, then, indeed, his soul burns within him, and all former motives receive additional strength, and flow in a new channel. He loves God, who gave him a sufficient Saviour; he loves Christ, who suffered for him, and who hath redeemed him. This love is the consequence of faith, it is heavenly, it is, like all other spiritual graces, the gift of God, a fruit of the Spirit, and therefore, it must dwell in the heart, and must be there at all times, and in every state. Like other gifts of the Spirit, it may be increased by cultivation, or may languish by neglect; and, therefore, it is the earnest prayer, and constant endeavour, of every Christian, that the love of God may fill his whole heart and soul. And can there be any stronger grounds for love, than those which a sinner has to love God. Depraved by nature, polluted and oppressed by numerous transgressions, sensible of the evil and danger of sin, conscious that he has no excuse to offer, no means nor power in himself to escape, he gladly accepts the offer of salvation through Christ. He feels his need, both of a Saviour and a sanctifying Spirit. He feels that Jesus is such a Saviour as he requires, that the Holy Spirit is such an influence as he needs. Having nothing to offer, he feels that the gift is free. Whether he look at the danger he has escaped, at the means of his redemption, or at the glorious hope to which he is raised, he has inexpressible cause for love. He loves God as a being perfect in goodness, and the source of every perfection. He loves God as his Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer. He loves God on account of the riches of his grace, the kind-

ness of his interposition, the sufficiency of the means of grace, the greatness of the guilt which is forgiven, the deliverance from the love of sin, as well as from its punishment, the security he feels in the refuge from all his fears, and the glorious prospects he beholds of futurity.

We owe to God supreme, undivided, and perfect love. We are to love him with all our soul, with all our heart, and strength, and above every other being. We are not to love at certain times, under peculiar circumstances, to a limited degree, in a particular way, or with any division or reserve. The command is express and unlimited: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." There must be nothing preferred to God; for the love of creatures, or of money, or of honours, is as certainly idolatry as the worship of Plutus. There is no essential difference between the pagan who bowed down before the image of his deity, and the man who bestows his affections on the attribute which it represented. It matters not whether the homage be paid to pleasure, or the goddess of pleasure, to riches, or the god of riches, to the passion and the quality, or the demon supposed to personify it, or preside over it. And thus it is, that in a land where Christianity is professed, there is mixed up, with an acknowledgment of the true God, as much real idolatry as ever existed in Rome; and the apostolic injunction, "Keep yourselves from idols," is just as necessary now, as when it was first uttered. If any one thing, more than another, could prove, and manifest, the deceitfulness of the heart, and the alienation of the affections from the living God, it is this, that so long as the most devoted Christian remains in this world of sin, he does mingle the worship of idols, with that of Jehovah, and offers incense, at

the shrine of demons, every time that he does homage to inordinate desires and sinful passions, or gives that affection to the works of God which he ought to yield to his Creator. He can only be, finally, redeemed, from the thralldom of this idolatry, and saved from the curse denounced against it, by the power and grace of the Spirit, and the atonement and intercession of the Son. God must be loved supremely, and in a transcendent degree, beyond all beings or things. Every thought and action must be regulated by this love. Where this exists, we cannot willingly break his commands, or indulge in sin, but must serve and seek, and long after God. The language of the heart will be, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon all the earth that I desire besides thee." The soul is wrapt up in love, every thought is love, ardent grateful love. Every desire, every action, is animated and regulated by this principle. In the contemplation of the sure mercies of God, in the prospect of the great things purchased for the redeemed, the heart burns with love, to the good, and holy, and gracious, and all-perfect God, who loved us, and gave himself for us. The Christian delights to think of God, to meditate on his perfections, to promote his glory, to tell the wonderful richness of his love. He delights to serve and obey God, to express his gratitude, to reflect on the danger from which he is saved, to contemplate the astonishing means of his redemption, and to anticipate the felicity which awaits him hereafter. He views death, not with fear, but with hope, and he loves God who hath abolished the power of death. He looks forward to his appearance in the presence of a holy and glorious God, where he is to answer for his conduct, and in this prospect Jesus appears as the indispensable atonement for his sin, as his prevailing Mediator, his sufficient defence, in

the hour of trial. His soul overflows with love, in the prospect, and he rejoices, and is transported, in the expectation of seeing this great God, this merciful Redeemer, and of being permitted to live with him, in the regions of glory. He loves God, as a being infinitely worthy of love. When he contemplates his glorious perfection, his heart cries out, "Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things. O God, who is like unto thee?" This love raises him above earth, and all its vain enjoyments, and leads him to prefer God to every thing below. Can this pure and hallowed love, in this high and bright degree, dwell in the heart of frail and guilty man? Behold the effects of the Holy Spirit! this heart, naturally corrupt, a stranger to God, careless of his commands, full of vanity and sin, is changed. The spirit of love dwells in it, that Holy Spirit promised by Christ, worketh in it, sanctifieth it, and fills it with the love of God. Let us, then, earnestly and incessantly, implore, from the Giver of every good and perfect gift, that we may obtain this Divine spirit of love; and let us, by all the considerations which have been mentioned, cultivate, and endeavour to increase the heavenly gift, remembering that God requires, in the reception and improvement of his gifts, the exercise of our affections and faculties, that to him who hath, shall be given, but from him who improveth not, shall be taken away even that which he had.

IV.

An effect of faith and love, must be obedience to the holy law of God. That faith is dead, which worketh not by love, and there can be no true love, without an active desire, to serve and please God. "If ye love me, keep my commandments," was the natural rule

for judging, laid down by our Saviour himself. All men are called, by the gospel, to accept of Christ, as their Saviour, and the first act of obedience is to obey this call. It is a most perilous error, to suppose that any man, whatever his correctness of conduct may be, or however free he may be, from the more marked vices of the heart, or of the life, is not guilty of great sin, in neglecting the call of God, to come unto Jesus and be saved. This is the very first principle of obedience; and, without entering into any inquiry into the number, or the nature, of either the good, or the bad points, which a man is pleased to admit, in the display of his character, a very little reflection ought to convince him, that, if the Son of God came down from the glory of heaven, and submitted to all the sufferings which are recorded in scripture; if, in his present glory, he be still guiding his redeemed, and calling from his bright throne, to the inhabitants of earth, to renounce the world and come to him; if, amidst the praises of the seraphim and cherubim, and the assembly of the glorified host of heaven, he be sending forth his Spirit, to call on the immortal souls, still in this land of mercy and of hope, to behold the greatness of his love, and the extent of his sufferings in their behalf; if he be calling unto them to bethink themselves of all that he, who so far transcends, in greatness and in excellence, the highest of God's creatures, endured in his agony, and on the cross, for their salvation, what must be the degree of that guilt which belongs to neglect and indifference to this call? It is vain for man to indulge in a delusion. Particular sins are, indeed, special infractions of individual commandments, but they derive their guilty character from the manifestation of disregard to the law of God, and disobedience to his holy will. But, in one, and that a most important point of view, none of these sins, nor all these

acts of transgression, from the first dawn of reason, till the final departure of the soul for judgment, can be more dangerous, or does, more assuredly, stamp the immortal spirit of a man with the character of rebellion and hopeless guilt, than that act which is so little dreaded, and so little considered, the act of disobeying and disregarding the call to come unto Christ from the world, and to enter into the kingdom of heaven. If the work of salvation be indeed of that importance, which induced Jesus to leave the glory of his Father, and come down to a state of humiliation and suffering on earth, and if he be indeed a Being exalted far beyond the power of our weak minds to comprehend, what must be the guilt and the danger of those, who, whatever their moral conduct otherwise may be, neglect his call, and lightly esteem his sufferings? The best of men, and the most devoted and humble of the followers of Jesus, can form but a very inadequate estimate of the greatness of his grace, and can know and feel but little, in comparison of what they wish to do, of the redeeming love of Christ; but they do know, and they do feel, that it would be the greatest of all sins not to obey his call, and come unto him, that they may be saved. I would wish earnestly to press these considerations on those who, on account of supposed freedom from the grosser sins, imagine that they have little to answer for when called hence. Jesus, in this their day of thoughtlessness, presents himself, saying, Behold what I suffered for thee; lovest thou me, as I loved thee: give unto me thy heart. A man may consider himself as quite safe, when covered by a panoply of all the virtues and moralities which can adorn life, and yet is that panoply not only imperfect, but altogether vulnerable and useless, so long as the gospel of Christ is not cordially and devoutly accepted. And it is just as positive a defiance of the

Almighty, and as decided an act of disobedience, to neglect this call, as it would be to break any part of the decalogue. An acceptance of Christ is the first, and essential, act of obedience, and the sole prelude to all his safety and happiness. He who obeys the call, acknowledges his sin, repents of it, hates it, and avoids it; he avoids all sin, whether consisting in positive violation of a command, or in omission of performance. He who obeys the call, must obey its requisitions. He who accepts of Jesus as a Saviour, must give himself to Jesus as a disciple. He who is willing to be saved by Jesus from the punishment of sin, must also be desirous to be rescued from its power, and kept from its love. He who professes to believe in Jesus as a Redeemer, must acknowledge that he is worthy of love; and he who loves, must imitate and obey. If he love Jesus, he must hate that which occasioned his suffering. If he love God, as perfect, he must also love his law, as perfect; and to say that he loveth a law he daily breaks, is absurd. Whether we consider the amazing love of God displayed in the gospel, the value of the gift bestowed for the salvation of man, or the importance of the call to man himself, it certainly must be confessed, that the most important duty he can fulfil, is to obey God, by coming unto Christ. There is a positive command to hear the beloved Son, and trust in him; and there is invitation and encouragement held out to all who are weary, and burdened with sin. If those who refused to obey the law of Moses, and to conform to the ceremonies of the Jewish dispensation were declared worthy of death, of how much sorer punishment must they be deserving who despise the call of the gospel, and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But it is not enough to profess acceptance of this gospel, and faith in Jesus. The very obeying of the call implies a desire

to be conformed to the image of Jesus, and to his example, who, though a Son, yet learned obedience. It implies a desire to possess the Spirit of Christ, and to have sin subdued in the soul. Now, sin does not consist in actions alone, but in the affections of the heart, in evil thoughts. It does not consist in neglecting ordinances, and particular commandments, but in any want of conformity unto the pure and holy principle of the law of God. Obedience, then, to God, does not consist in the mere performance of certain duties and actions, but in the entire regulation of the heart and affections, according to the strict, and universal, law of God, which enjoins both faith and love. He, then, who reads the moral law, and endeavours to conform his actions to it, without attending to the thoughts and desires of the heart, does indeed know little of the spirit of obedience; and he who best tries to live in the spirit of obedience, is most inclined to acknowledge, humbly, that he is a very unprofitable servant.

Perseverance is a duty connected with obedience, and means a continued performance of what is required. It is, in the scriptures, sometimes translated patience, as, "ye have need of patience," that is, of perseverance. It is not sufficient to obey particular laws, and at certain times; we must persevere in, and run the race that is set before us. Blessed be God, who hath not left us to our own blindness, and our own weakness, who hath promised his Holy Spirit to work faith in us, and love and obedience, that our sins being washed away, our corruptions subdued, we may be conformed to the image of Christ, and be at last made perfect in holiness, when we pass into another state. Blessed be God, who hath "chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame, before him in love." "Let every one that nameth

the name of Christ, depart from iniquity," and live "as the elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience."

V.

Man being created, and redeemed, to glorify God, he ought to devote himself entirely to his service. This does not imply that he should seclude himself from the world, and live in continual meditation or indolent contemplation, but that he shall perform the more acceptable part of making his whole life, every thought and action, the performance of every duty, subservient to the honour and glory of God. Like the apostle, whether he eat or drink, or whatsoever he do, he does all to the glory of God. He considers himself as bound to glorify God, both from his creation and redemption, and joins in opinion with Paul, when he says, "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, and ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." He considers that he is no longer his own, but that "Christ died for all, that they who live, should not, henceforth, live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them." He, therefore, gives himself to God, as a living offering, holy and acceptable, through Christ. He does not devote himself to God, in the observance of an ordinance, or the performance of some duties, but he endeavours to make his whole life one act of devotion, by doing all things, and willing all things, to the honour of God. As there is no gift he doth not receive from God, so there is no gift he does not devote unto him. He is not devout in his prayers only, he does not perceive the presence of God in the church alone, but

he is devout in all things, and seeth God everywhere. He carries the spirit of Christianity, through his whole life, and through every hour of the day; his time, his pursuits, his thoughts, are devoted to God, that he may please him in all things, and love him at all times. Alas! how few yield this fruit of faith! nay, awful to say, how few wish, or intend, to bring forth fruit, in this perfection. I am not mistaken, when I appeal to every man, whether he be not conscious, that every day he might have served God more strictly, and whether, in many instances, when he beheld the strictness and purity of the law of God, he did not frame an intention, not to conform so fully and universally to it, as greater care and watchfulness, might have enabled him to do? If any man believe, that he hath fully known the strictness, and purity of the law of God, that he hath experienced the promised grace of God, to enable him to keep it, and, that he hath intended, and constantly desired and endeavoured, to observe it, to the highest degree, that the promised aid of the Spirit, could have enabled him to do, I should much fear, that he is yet a stranger, to the power of religion. It is, indeed, an awful reflection, but it is, nevertheless, a true account of the corruption of human nature, and of the unsubdued sin, even of saints, that they not only do not keep the law of God, with a perfect heart, not only do not devote themselves entirely to God, but cannot even bring themselves to intend to do so, in that degree, to which their ability might be raised. Is not this deep ground for humility? Does it not afford ample room for amendment and repentance? Is it not, indeed, a disregard to God, a misimprovement of his grace and divine aid? What, but the blindness of a sinner, could make the danger of this conduct, be concealed? What, but a perversion of reasoning, could make the intentional stopping short, of an

attainable degree of christian perfection, appear less sinful, than the breach of a particular commandment? Are not both of these marks of contempt towards God, and equally a want of conformity to his holy will? What, but infinite love could pardon this conduct? Who, but a prevailing and all-powerful Redeemer, could save from the punishment it deserves? How could man possibly escape, were he not justified by Christ, and did he not flee to him for salvation? But let us, constantly, remember, that no man can be saved by Jesus, without faith in him, and that we have no living faith, but only a dead assent to truths, which we cannot do otherwise than believe, if we do not, in consequence of it, judge that if Christ died for us, we must live to him. We must devote soul and body to his service—we must become temples to the living God, and walk as becometh the heirs of salvation—we must not grieve the Spirit of God, or provoke him to depart, but, by watching and prayer, we must endeavour to procure more abundant supplies of grace, and become more and more conformed to the example of Christ, whose meat and drink it was, to do the will of his heavenly Father. As Jesus, every where, and at all times, sought the glory of God, and devoted himself entirely to his service, and made it his constant study to please him, so must we, his disciples, follow his example. In public and in private, in the exercises of religion, in the engagements of life, in the activity of business, in the indulgence of recreation, in the choice of our associates, in our transactions with men, in our fellowship with our families, in the secret purposes of our hearts, and constant succession of thought, one uniform, one fixed intention is to prevail, namely, the advancement of the glory of God, the dedication of the moment, however it be spent, to his service, the correspondence of our purpose, to his will, the con-

formity of our thoughts and desires, to his pure and holy law.

Ah! how different should the world be, did every individual endeavour to do all to the glory of God, and with a desire to please him! Were we, in the morning, to look forward to the business of the day, in this spirit, and pray that we might be able, in all things, to remember that we are servants of the Most High, and under his inspection, should not our life be very different from what it is. We ought ever to remember, that we do not perform our part, if we do not perform that part for the service of God. Be it in the schemes of merchandise, or the labour of the mind, or the ordinary duties of life, or the passing occupation of the moment, the feeling ought to be paramount and governing, that we are doing what we do, as servants of God, and for his glory. Were it so, how much should we abstain from that we do or think! how much should we perform that we neglect! How subdued should our passions be! how kind and benevolent should we be to all! In every variety of intercourse and communication, would not vanity and self-interest be set aside, and the question seriously and solemnly put to ourselves, whether we were doing what we ought to do, in the way in which it ought to be done, as a mean of carrying on the purposes of God in this life.

Were we thus to live, we should indeed walk by faith, and not by sight. We should consider the other world the point of attraction, and make every thing here subservient to it. The mind should be set at liberty from the power of this world, and so weaned from any and every thing that it contains, or that its spirit embraces, as to make every avocation be performed as a duty, and every duty, and every pursuit, be connected with a subserviency to the will and the glory of God; every enjoyment, partaken of as a gift

of God, as an incentive to look forward to higher and future felicity; every disappointment, received as a mean of leading the mind nearer the everlasting state. As a servant performs his duty, and fulfils what is required of him, as a fixed obligation, without performing the special acts of service, from the mere pleasure of performing the acts themselves, so he who is weaned from the world, and walks by faith, performs all the duties of his station, and takes an active interest in the avocations he is called to, or the objects he is to pursue in this life, not merely from the gratification resulting from the things themselves, or the temporal inducements to seek after them, but in subserviency to his christian calling, and with regard to the will and the glory of God. It were easy to contrast walking by faith and by sight, in multiplied examples; but the spirit is the same in all, and in all we may have a manifestation of that victory, that entire and complete victory, which faith achieves over the world, in every part of its spirit and principle. We find, in proportion as a man walks by faith, that he acquiesces in the will of God cheerfully, and even with rejoicing; he acquires a superiority over the things of time, a contentment and serenity of mind, and a peace and freedom from the storms of passion, and the vexations of life, which mere human philosophy has never been able to confer, and thus he well may be said to have his conversation in heaven, for he is, even on earth, actuated by the same principles, and engaged in the same sanctified service, with the citizens of that happy and holy place. If this be so, how careful ought the Christian to be in the selection of his companions! how guarded in his intercourse with a world that knows not God!

VI.

We are to venerate God above all beings. The very first sentence of our Lord's prayer is, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." A command is set apart in the decalogue, expressly to say, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain;" and "great plagues, and of long continuance," are denounced against those who should break this commandment, in order, says Moses, "that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD." The prophet Jeremiah records, that "because of swearing the land mourneth." The curse is not pronounced on those who swear falsely, but on those who swear irreverently. Those who perjure themselves are, indeed, under the condemnation of God, for they have appealed to the God of truth to confirm, at the day of judgment, what they know to be false; and even in this life, Zechariah declares, that the curse of God shall enter into the house of him who sweareth falsely, and consume even the stones and the timber thereof. But profane swearing is not less criminal than false swearing, for "holy and reverend" is the name of God, and it is never to be pronounced with indifference, or even alluded to, without reverence. To swear profanely, is by many accounted an accomplishment, provided a polite, and not a vulgar oath or execration be employed. But to set aside all other considerations, and other modifications of swearing, I may only observe, that the imprecations employed by the swearer, against himself or others, must either mean nothing, in which case they are connecting the Deity with nothing, or, they must be viewed as prayers for the everlasting destruction of

persons or things. There is, therefore, both an irreverence in swearing, and an antichristian or diabolical spirit, each of which must prevent every pious man from uttering an oath, or taking the name of any one of the Holy Trinity in vain. Nor are those exclamations of surprise, in which God is called to bless us, much more innocent than imprecations, for they are alike irreverent. They are uttered thoughtlessly, and on account of the merest trifle.

But we are not to venerate the name of God, and despise his presence. If it be contemptuous to take the name of God in vain, it is no less so to say, do, and think those things before him, which he hath positively forbidden. It is always considered as an aggravation of an offence, when it is done in defiance of the lawgiver, for, if done with concealment, it manifests, at least, a respect for his opinion; but with regard to God, this principle is forgotten, and provided a sin be not considered criminal by men, or may be concealed from them, the reflection that the all-seeing eye of God beholdeth, has seldom much influence. There cannot be a more striking picture of the omnipresence of God, than that which is presented suddenly by the prophet Ezekiel, who is taken to a precise spot, a hole in the wall, where he is desired to dig, until he discover a door, deep and concealed. Through this, he is made to enter and behold the wickedness of those who say, "The Lord seeth not," even that Lord, who, at once, displayed to the prophet the hidden places of iniquity. Nor ought it to be put out of solemn consideration, that whilst men are indulging in sinful thoughts, and, with effrontery, performing sinful acts in his presence, the angels in heaven are veiling with their wings, their faces, and their feet, before the throne of the holy and almighty God, and are joining the other sanctified spirits, in praise and adora-

tion, and venerate the great and glorious name of Jehovah.

VII.

We are to give God thanks and praise in all things, adore his goodness, and his greatness, and magnify and bless his holy name. The contemplation of the perfections of the Deity, must naturally excite in every mind, feelings, more or less keen, according to the perception of these perfections, and, which, indeed, are as certainly expressive of these perceptions, as belief is of the perception of truth. Reflection, on the greatness of God, and all those attributes which are connected with majesty or power, must excite feelings of holy admiration, and devout astonishment. Reflection, on the goodness of God, as displayed in his conduct towards all beings, but particularly towards ourselves, in the schemes of providence and redemption, must excite feelings of gratitude and love. But, considerations of the greatness and goodness of God go together, and are inseparable in the mind of beings, infinitely inferior to the Deity; and, therefore, the feelings resulting from these considerations, must always be mixed, and the expression of these feelings, which we call praise, consists in a lively acknowledgment, both of the love and of the power of God, in a keen utterance of grateful thanks, and in an ardent effort to exalt and magnify our God. The faculties, or powers of the mind, are differently exercised, in different acts of piety. In some, the judgment chiefly operates, in others, and particularly in adoration and praise, the imagination operates conspicuously, though very far from exclusively, of the other powers; for, rational and acceptable praise, must always be sanctioned by the understanding. Extolling, praising, and blessing

God, require to have the mind, and particularly the imagination, gradually wrought up, to a pitch of keen feeling, by successive reflections, each leading to a more lively perception, of the greatness and goodness of God; or at other times a keen sense of these suddenly takes place, and all at once the soul breaks forth in praise. But, in whatever way praise be produced, whether by slow steps, if I may use the expression, or by a quick impulse, the feeling is here but short-lived, for our powers are weak, and our attractions to earth many; but in heaven, where souls are completely sanctified and invigorated, they cease not, day or night, to praise the Lord, in strains which mortals cannot utter. Yet, even here, we may begin the song of praise, and, by frequent essays, may learn part of a hymn of Zion. By seeking, more diligently, communion with God, our souls may, with lively feelings, enter into the expressions of inspired saints. By meditating frequently on the mercy, love, and omnipotence of God, more especially displayed in the redemption of man, the heart may be led to rise in gratitude and praise to God, and, by encouraging an habitual exercise of thanksgiving and adoration, the soul, by the blessing of God, and the operation of his Spirit, may become devotional and heavenly minded. It must, however, be carefully recollected, that all praise and adoration, yielded by a rational creature, must be from rational motives, proceeding from a conviction of the judgment that the ground of praise is just. The enthusiast may praise God, from the imagination alone, the sinner may praise God, for the means of indulgence, and the self-righteous man may praise God, that he is not like other men. But the Christian praiseth God with all his soul, with his understanding, his imagination, and every faculty made holy by the Spirit of Christ. He praiseth God with deep humility, fervent love,

lively faith, exalted hope, steadfast reliance. He praiseth God, as his reconciled God, through Jesus. All his thoughts, his prayers, his praises, his hopes, pass through the Redeemer of mankind, and are connected with the cross of Christ. He praiseth the greatness and majesty of God, with a deep sense of his own humble and abject state. He praiseth the love of God with a keen sense of his own unworthiness. He praiseth the grace of God, with a strong conviction of his own inability to rescue himself. Whether he praise God, for his temporal mercies, or his spiritual gifts, for his providence here, or glorious promises of future blessedness, he connecteth all things, with his own demerit, and the interposition of Jesus Christ. His praise proceeds from faith and love, and his faith and love are enlivened by praise. Let those, then, who desire the cordial of heavenly communion, be frequent in their adoration. Let them praise God, and give him thanks, in all things. Let the aspirations of the heart ascend habitually to God, in prayers and praises, in their secret meditations, and, as occasion suggests, in their ordinary employments. The feelings, desires, and aspirations, being the same in all ages, the language of David will be familiar to the mind, and will, more especially, be employed in those seasons set apart for private meditation and praise. In the Psalms, the mercy, power, and majesty of God, are set forth in striking language, each sentence heightening the feeling, excited by the preceding; one idea after another, is raised in the mind, each more powerful in its effect, on the heart and imagination, than the former, until, at last, as a certain combination of sounds, makes music, so the combination of feelings, thus excited by glowing language, produces a harmony of feeling, corresponding to the praises which have been uttered. Grandeur and sublimity of language, are required for the expression of grand

and sublime ideas. Pathetic language, for tender sentiments, and, by adapting the language to the sentiment, the feeling is increased. The aid of music has also a powerful influence, in increasing the effect of language, and heightening the feeling, which is expressed, especially, in social acts of praise. How far it is useful, for any one, to avail himself of the aid of music, in his private devotions, or to chaunt the praises of God alone, must, I apprehend, depend on his natural taste for music, and on the effect it produces on his soul, for every mean of improvement, and of increasing devotional feelings, should be employed. But, whatever be done in this respect, there cannot be a doubt, as to the duty of every one, whose total want of musical ear, would not produce discord, and prevent others from singing, to join in the public praise of God. Some there are, who sit mute during this part of public worship, as if it were beneath them, to thank and praise God, and such vain votaries of folly, are not to be reclaimed, from their delusion, by any thing I can say. Some, refrain from a better motive, a fear lest their ignorance of music should spoil the harmony, but these can at least sing in a low tone, which will not have the injurious effect they apprehend. I have only one other remark to make, namely, that in some congregations, the music is neither devotional nor selected, so as to put it in the power of all to join. There may be also music of so doubtful a character, that it may be difficult to bring a specific charge against it, and yet the bad effect may be felt. It would be vain to deny, that music has a power and an influence on the mind in inspiring feelings, which could not otherwise be produced, and therefore, it accords with reason that it ought to be taken advantage of in solemn worship. But we are not left to the dictates of reason alone, we have an express

command. The advantage of singing, in place of merely repeating a psalm or hymn, is that, by appropriate music, the mind may be more deeply impressed, and the heart with more fervent and ardent devotion, be enabled to utter the praises of God. Whenever the music is not accordant with the sentiment, and whenever it ceases to be simple, and of that solemn strain which belongs to the house of God, it is unfit for his service. All are commanded to join in this important part of public worship; all are entitled to do so; all are promised, and may expect a blessing in doing so. It is then deeply to be lamented if, in any congregation, the music, however fine it may in one respect be, should not be adapted to raise the devotional feeling, which is intended, and still more, if it should have a contrary effect, or be such as must preclude the people at large from joining in those adorations they come to offer. To depart from devotional music, in which all can join, and by which all may be influenced, is not merely a proof of want of good taste and deficiency of judgment, but is counteracting, in as far as man can do so, the effect of a special ordinance; and those who lend their aid to such conduct, must remember, that for all the evil consequences, whether positive or negative, whether by leading the mind entirely from sense to sound, or, as still more frequently happens, by interfering with devotional feeling, or repressing its production, at least in so far as human means can, they are responsible, and, whether heedlessly or perversely, are involving themselves in great guilt. In all cases where the congregation is deprived of the full benefit of so essential and valuable a part of public worship, it is the duty of the clergyman, and of every individual, to do his utmost, to put a stop to the evil of injuring, or profaning this part of the service of God.

VIII.

Dependence on the providence, and trust in the promises of God, are duties which must be acknowledged by all those who believe in a providence. With regard to the attributes and perfections of God, we may indulge in investigations, but can know nothing with certainty, saving what is revealed unto us. With regard to the providence of God, in the creation and government of the universe, different opinions have been obtained. Whilst some, have denied the existence of a providence altogether, others admit it in the great concerns of the world, or the most important epochs of a man's life, but do not acknowledge it as minute and universal. Some suppose that every thing was fixed from the first, and arranged according to a wise plan. Others, that events were left entirely to what may be termed natural causes, Providence only interfering as they occur, so as to overrule or modify them for good purposes. But there is no argument against a minute or special providence, existing according to a predetermined plan, which will not militate against the prescience and omniscience of God. If these perfections be admitted to exist, to an infinite degree, in a Being infinite in power, wisdom, and goodness, a special providence, acting according to a settled plan, must also be admitted. For nothing can be foreseen which is not predetermined, nothing which ever has existed, or ever shall exist can be absent from or unknown to an infinite mind; and nothing, not even that which we consider most trifling, can exist or occur, except for a wise purpose, if it must have been foreseen by a Being infinitely wise, good, and powerful. Two opinions respecting the predetermination of God may be noticed, though both

lead to the same result. One is, that God, foreseeing how all the parts and principles of the universe would progressively act on each other, and how final causes would operate on the human mind, did, in his view before the creation, so check and modify these, as to produce what was most good and proper. Others, from supposing that this opinion implied that the Deity found it necessary to alter the original plan, which, consequently must have been imperfect, conceived that by one act of the infinite mind, all was fixed and determined. The first opinion does not imply that a plan was formed for operation, and then altered, far less, that creation was accomplished and then the scheme modified. It merely supposes, and who dare do more than conjecture?—it merely supposes that the omniscience of God, foreseeing how the chain of causes, in the material and moral world, would, by the laws he intended to give to nature, continue to operate, did, at the same instant, so determine the links of this chain, as to produce from beginning to end a wise and determined result. We must not inconsiderately suppose that these were successive acts in the divine mind, and the fruit of deliberation, because in our finite mind this must have been the case; for to God all things are present at once, and were determined the instant creation was determined on, which was from all eternity. Such knowledge must always be too high for us to comprehend, for who can understand what is infinite? That every thing was not left to the regular operation of causes, operating according to established laws, is, so far as we presume to judge, evident from the deluge, and from the prolonged appearance of the sun in the days of Joshua, to say nothing of other examples, and of the history of the moral world. But, although these and many other events be contrary to the general operation of esta-

blished laws, yet these and the circumstances connected with them, did enter into the original plan of Providence, and were foreseen and determined, together with creation itself from all eternity. Was not the sickness of Benhadad, king of Syria, foreseen? its natural termination foreseen? and the interference of Hazael to take away that life, which the sickness would not have destroyed?

In the moral world every thing is as much under the direction of God as in the material, but with this difference, that in the material world, every thing is accomplished by the operation of efficient causes, acting on passive matter, whilst, in the moral world, every thing is conducted by final causes, acting on a free mind, which may yield or resist, being itself active. Motives operate on the mind, not as efficient causes do upon matter, but as the influence of advice does upon man, and may be resisted by those states of the mind, known under the name of perversity, selfishness, &c. There are two classes of incitements to moral action,—the passions and desires which belong to man as an animal, and the rational faculty he possesses as a moral agent. These sometimes co-operate. In other instances they are contrary to one another, and a competition takes place between opposite principles, in which, if the contest terminate reasonably, the judgment must regulate the will. All the final causes operate as desires, which originate from one or other of the two sources already mentioned, and which, in a rational being, are indulged or counteracted, according as they appear to lead to good, or to evil, or as they are approved of, or prohibited, by the sense a man has of right and wrong. The view, however, of good and evil is very apt to be obscured by passion, which misrepresents the object of desire, as capable of affording immediate pleasure, though, at the price of

self-condemnation, or of a future evil, which, nevertheless, through the same medium of misrepresentation, it is hoped may be averted, or its importance is underrated.

All those motives, which influence the mind, are as much under the power of God, as those efficient causes, which act on the universe, and they are directed by him, for the accomplishment of his designs in the moral world. How wonderful the power and knowledge which can regulate the universe, and direct the secret thoughts of the human race, which can so connect the changes, in the different parts of the material world, the very winds which blow, with the purposes of the heart of man, as, in every instance, to bring to pass that which is wise and proper. We are not to take a limited view of providence, and consider it as watching over, and regulating, the changes in the universe, the variations of the earth, the water, and the air; but must view it, also, as watching over the mind of man, and all his conduct, appointing that which shall befall him, and changing, or preventing, the purposes of his will, according to wise decrees, and yet, without destroying the liberty of man as a moral agent. The doctrine of a providence, and of the decrees of God, does not, by any means, favour the doctrine of necessity, by which philosophers would destroy the responsibility of man, absolve him from all punishment for his crimes, and, indeed, make God the author of evil and sin. There is no doubt, if we considered God merely as a being infinite in power and knowledge, that there might be an absolute necessity, as there might, on the other hand, by his permission, be an uncontrolled liberty. But, from considering the holiness, and other perfections of God, and, from what we know of the operations of the human mind, it is evident that there is neither one nor other of these states existing. The

first would defeat the use of reason and conscience, and render man a mere machine. The second would imply the want of a providence, and of the moral government of God. The real state seems to lie between the extremes. The will is perfectly free, but the conduct is not. It is in a man's power to wish, or to be inclined to indulge in any conduct ; but he is not permitted the means of doing so, unless God please. Man is to be considered in two views. First, as an individual intended to perform a certain part in society, or in this world, for the glory of God, and the accomplishment of his plans, appointed for the temporal state of our race. For this purpose, which may be called his political state, such final causes are employed, as may influence him to what is proper, and, on the other hand, when his desires are inconsistent with the plans of Providence, the means of gratifying them are withheld. In this view, man, though he have no regard to the will of God, will make his desires conform to what he deems to be good in itself, and to what he may reasonably expect to have the means of acquiring. But here his judgment is very fallible, for he does not know what shall be absolutely good for him, nor what means he does, or may, possess ; yet, in this view, man is free to choose ; his judgment is, indeed, liable to great error, his best schemes may be disconcerted, or he may place his desires upon what is beyond his reach, and spend his time in prosecuting that which shall end in disappointment. But, still, he is free to desire and to act, and, for his direction, he is furnished with reason and prudence ; but the means of success are often withheld. The purposes are over-ruled for ultimate good, although he do not obtain what he originally desired. In this view, the immediate question is rather that of expediency, or political propriety, than of right and wrong, though the latter

is ever to be considered as a regulator of the former. The monitor within cannot, in this view, give him perfect advice, because he does not know the data well, and the result is dependent on contingencies, and the will of others. He is, therefore, not only free to act, but must deliberate well how he is to act, the result being to him very uncertain. Now, in all this apparent uncertainty, were there no superior power to regulate affairs, we should be in a very bad state indeed. Either things must be left to themselves, or must be under regulation. If every man did according to his pleasure, without control, nothing could be made to act, with certainty, for ultimate good; and unless every thing do act for good, the universe is imperfect; and if there be no control, it is also clear that things are not under the government of God. When a society consists of men who have interfering desires, and pursuits, and different views in their conduct, and where, moreover, every individual is very ignorant, it must be necessary to have a governor, who shall rule every thing for the general good. The governor of the world must be perfect in goodness, wisdom, and justice; and, if so, ought to be trusted to with confidence.

In the second view, man is considered as a moral being, acting either rightly or wrongly; and here he is directed not by prudence or expediency, but by the faculty of conscience, which instructs him in good and evil. He feels, that though there be temptations to act wrong, there are inducements to act right; and he feels, that when he does act wrong, he does so willingly—that he might and ought to have resisted. God hath given him the power of judging, and the power of acting. But, from the original corruption of his nature, produced by Adam yielding to the temptation of Satan, he is much disposed to act in opposition to his judgment; yet, in so doing, he is

conscious that he does wrong, and that he does it with the consent of his will. To suppose otherwise would make God the author of sin. But although the attributes of God forbid the possibility of absolute necessity, and consequently the necessity of sinning, there are yet two cases in which the liberty of man is mercifully interfered with; the first is, in making him do right in the work of his conversion; the second is, in restraining his wickedness from going the length it would otherwise do; but in these cases another agent comes into view, namely, the influence of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying the heart. In every thing in which mind is concerned, man feels himself free; and it is the grace of God which enables him to use this freedom, to the choice of that good part, which shall never be taken from him.

In the moral capacity of man, his conduct does not lead to results effected by contingencies, or the will of others, as in the former case, but to consequences, which are established and foreseen. Good, or benefit, is the object in the political capacity; but we neither know exactly whether what we desire be truly good, nor whether we employ the best means for obtaining success, nor whether these, if the best, shall accomplish what we desire. Rectitude is the object in the moral capacity, and we know what is right—we know the means of attaining to it, and we know that these means, shall always be effectual. Here, then, in the most important capacity, every thing is sure, if we choose to yield attention. Now, there are three inducements to act, in this capacity—our own inclination, the influence of the Spirit of God, and the influence of Satan, exerted by presenting motives to the mind, which it may, or may not yield to. The bias, from the natural disposition, is to evil, and, therefore, the choice would be bad, did not the grace of God counteract this, by the aid of the Spirit,

in those who are sanctified. They, though free to choose and act, are assisted by the Spirit, and by him their inclinations or wills are sanctified, though in this life, not perfectly. A corrupt mind, and wicked will, must lead to unholy conduct; a sanctified will, a pure mind, must lead to holy conduct. The fruit must depend on the tree. Man, in his natural and renewed state, acts freely. The difference in the latter case, consisting in the sanctification by the Spirit, in the change of nature.

In prosecuting our views of Providence, it may be observed, that God operates in many instances, in opposition to all probable means, perhaps, in order to show that he alone reigns and governs. The race, therefore, is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. At the same time, it is not the less true, that when well laid schemes are defeated, second causes are employed to counteract them, though these are often as unperceived as they were unforeseen. As Providence doth always act by means, it is evident that he who does not employ the natural means, for accomplishing what he desires, and who does not obviate, as far as he lawfully can, every obstacle to the attainment of his purpose, has no reason to expect success, and dare no more ascribe his failure to the interference of Providence, than he may attribute to Providence his moral transgressions. A man may indeed be successful, who has no title from his diligence and skill to expect it; and on the other hand may fail, although he employ the utmost human prudence and exertion, God seeing it fit, thus, to demonstrate his superintendence over the affairs of men. But, generally speaking, success and skilful exertion, are connected together. There are two circumstances, under Providence, requisite to success: that we do not attempt what we have not the means

of accomplishing; and that we do always use every lawful mean in our power, for obtaining what we are satisfied we may lawfully and prudently desire. Paul, who had been forewarned that the crew of the vessel should be preserved, yet expressly said to the captain, "unless these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." Whoever, then, professes to trust in Providence, must, of consequence, employ those means, which Providence provides and appoints. He who proposes to go to a distant city, never can hope to arrive there, if he wilfully remain stationary. The very neglect of the means, is a proof that Providence does not intend he should go there; but the intention is evidently fulfilled through his own remissness. On the other hand, whenever the means of obtaining what we wish are not in our power, it is evident that it does not form a part of the plan of Providence, to grant at the present time our wish. When means, which we expect to be adequate, are proved by the result not to be so, we are to form the same conclusion concerning Providence, for we are very ignorant respecting the power of means. We do not know, in every instance, the power of even efficient causes, or the effects produced on matter, though these, by the wisdom of philosophers, have been very much reduced to a matter of calculation, in those cases where the data are not variable. But with respect to final causes, we are in the greatest uncertainty, not only because the influence of these depends on the different states of a mind, which is itself active, but also, because we are often quite unacquainted with what causes may be operating on the minds of others, who have a relation to the event we anticipate. A philosopher could calculate to a second, how soon a stone of a given weight and size, should fall to the ground, from a given height through the atmosphere; but the same philosopher,

with all his wisdom, although he can determine the revolution of the planets, and demonstrate the grand laws of astronomy, cannot do more than guess at events which are contingent. Yet, not only those events which depend on uniform causes, such as the revolution of the heavenly bodies, but also those which depend on many contingencies, are absolutely certain with regard to God, and are equally determined by him, according to sure and good laws. The knowledge of man indeed, with regard to these, and respecting their occurrence, may be very different, yet, he is as certain that the one shall prove good and wise in the result, as the other. If every thing be under the guidance of a wise and good God, there is no more reason to expect that the sun shall rise to-morrow, than that the scheme of a good man shall end well, whether the result accord with his expectations or not. The ultimate can never be determined by the immediate consequence. The latter is often very different from the former, but may be necessary to it, and if adverse, is a mean of trying our dependence on God, and resignation to his will. There cannot be a more striking example of this, than in the history of Jacob and Joseph, the different parts of which, confirm the position so clearly, that it would be superfluous to expatiate on the subject. They persuade us irresistibly, that we never can, immediately determine the result of our plans, or the injury or benefit of events. Circumstances, apparently trivial, or occurring to our view, fortuitously, may be productive of the most important consequences to ourselves, or others, and the disappointment of our expectation, may be necessary to the production of an event, on which our future advantages are to rest. That actions, apparently fortuitous, are employed expressly for the accomplishment of special purposes, is evident from many

instances, even in our own observation; and a striking instance is recorded in scripture, where it is related that Ahab was appointed by God to be slain at Ramoth Gilead. During the battle, a man who took no aim, and who, so far from having any particular person in view, drew his bow at a venture, gave the king his mortal wound. Another circumstance to be attended to, in the government of Providence, is the conduct of wicked men and foolish men. Either of those characters, were there no Providence, would do much mischief, immediately and remotely in the world. But, under the control of God, every thing must end well for his people, and ill for his enemies. One great source of misapprehension, in this matter, proceeds from confining our views entirely to this life, and overlooking its connexion with an everlasting condition, to which it is only preparatory. Yet, even in this world, God restraineth the wrath of man, and maketh the remainder praise him. The worst and most wicked characters, must promote his glory, and from their evil designs, he brings forth good. Joseph told his brethren, in this view, that though they meant to do him evil in their conduct, God meant it for good; and the scriptures saith to Pharaoh, "even for this same purpose, have I raised thee up, that my name might be declared throughout all the earth."

If those events, which are connected with our deliberate and voluntary actions, be under the regulation of Providence, it is still more evident, that those circumstances, which affect us, without any premeditated operation of our own, and which, indeed, are so far independent of our will that they are called fortuitous, are under the special direction of Providence; of this description are our own health and life, the life of our dearest friend, and innumerable events over which we have no kind of control, which

we can neither foresee, nor prevent if we did foresee ; these are all under the direction of God, and whether sweet or bitter to our taste, shall ultimately prove salutary. A time approaches, when all which is dark and mysterious, shall be cleared up, and when all the ways of Providence shall be vindicated to man—when it shall be evident, that from first to last, in the whole course of time, every appointment was marked with wisdom, goodness, and truth ; and when it shall appear, that even our most bitter afflictions, were decreed by the tender mercy of the Lord.

Reliance, then, on the Providence of God, is a rational and necessary consequence, of the admission of a Providence. If all things be foreseen, and appointed, and regulated by a God, infinite in wisdom, power, goodness, mercy, justice, and truth, it is clear, that we ought to rely on his care, and acquiesce in his pleasure. We would, naturally, trust with confidence, our affairs to a friend, who was skilful, active, and powerful. How much more ought we to trust to God, who is infinite in his perfections, and unchangeable in his regards ? If God, long before we were created, foresaw our creation, and determined it at the precise time, that we might perform a certain part in the world, for the promotion of his glory, and the furtherance of his purposes, not only respecting ourselves as individuals, but also with regard to others, we have a pledge in our creation, that these purposes shall be fulfilled ; had there been no design to fulfil, we had not been created. If God take the management of the world and of men, and some being must act as a ruler, it becomes all those who believe in his attributes, to trust in his Providence. Reason leads to this conclusion, and no one who admits a Providence at all, can rationally mistrust God. But we are not left to the influence of reason ; we are, in scripture, expressly informed that

God doth exercise a Providence, and are commanded to trust in him. James declareth, "Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world." Paul says, "God hath made, of one blood, all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." Isaiah proclaims, "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." And the greatest of all the prophets, assured his disciples, of the Providence of God, saying, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are numbered. Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." "Your heavenly Father, knoweth that ye have need of these things. Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Agreeably to this, he, by the mouth of Paul, again assures his people, that "all things shall work together for good, to those who love God, and are called according to his purpose;" and to every disciple he says, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," and therefore his disciples may well conclude, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" The apostle had no doubt of the wise superintendence, and sufficient care of God, from this irresistible argument, if God so loved his people as to give his own Son for them, how much more will he not freely with him give them all things?—surely food and raiment, and the things of this life, are as nothing, when compared to the sufferings and death of Jesus; and if this greatest gift of love were not withheld, certainly, all other good gifts will be bestowed, and, indeed, are purchased for men by Jesus. This leads me to a very important conclusion, namely, that it is only the disciples of Jesus, who can, firmly,

and reasonably, trust in Providence. The wicked, doubtless, have often a good portion here, and here alone, but they have no ground to depend on God, that all things shall be for their good. They are favoured with temporal blessings—riches and power—both that they may thus become instruments of Providence, in accomplishing his designs with respect to others, and also, that these gifts may lead the mind to the Giver. Hereafter, the evil will be the greater, according as these objects have been neglected. The disciple of Jesus, on the other hand, in all things, not only considers himself as an instrument of Providence, for advancing his designs in society, but, also, as having his promise, that all things shall end well, and be, both for his true advantage here, and his happiness hereafter. He, therefore, with firm and stable confidence, rests on the promise of God, and commits every thing to his disposal. He useth that judgment which God hath given him, in directing his choice and pursuits, and considers it as his duty, to employ every lawful mean, to obtain what he desires. But, he also prays for the direction of God in his choice, and his blessing on the means employed; and when he fails, he firmly believes, that the result is better for him than that he had desired. Every success, every comfort, he receives with gratitude from the hand of God, and enjoys as given by a wise and good God. Every disappointment, every affliction, he receives, also, as from the hand of God, acknowledging that he, from his ignorance, knows not what is good for him, and is persuaded that God hath acted wisely and well. Every indulgence, he receives with joy and gratitude, and endeavours to make subservient, to the glory of God. Every calamity, he views as a paternal chastisement, and is solicitous to improve accordingly, and render productive of benefit. Under the misfortunes, or evils

of life, some endeavour to support themselves, either by stifling all feeling, and encouraging a torpor of mind, or, by viewing the calamity as inevitable, and, therefore, calling in the aid of that philosophy, which teaches that the indulgence of sorrow and vexation, only adds to the evil. But the Christian, whilst he feels in all that a man ought to feel, and particularly in the loss of his friends, is also persuaded, that the event is good and necessary, and, therefore, that he ought not merely to be resigned and patient, but to be thankful in tribulation, receiving it from the hand of God, as absolutely necessary for him, and as intended, either, for his future comfort here, or, as a salutary chastisement from a kind father, for his improvement in Christianity. The gospel teaches, that no man by anxiety, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature, and that every thing is well ordered and sure for those who love God. A Christian, in common with other men, is to use the faculties God hath given him, for his preservation and advantage, and, if he neglect these, or act foolishly, he is to expect that the result shall be contrary to his desire, though it be not contrary to the ordinary course of things. Yet, even although his imprudence meet with its natural consequences, still he hath this advantage over others, that the consequences shall be overruled for his ultimate or everlasting benefit, if he pray for the sanctification thereof. The loss he meets with, or the disappointment of his wishes, may be a just punishment for his negligence, yet this, like all other chastisements, shall be for his good, and either stimulate him to greater diligence and circumspection, or, at all events, promote his moral improvement, and his preparation for heaven. These truths, the Christian fully gives his assent to; but, when the hour of trial comes, how often does his faith fail? and how seldom does he with cordiality say, "Not

my will, but thine be done!" How seldom does he view his affliction, as really a blessing, and receive his disappointment, as a favour from Heaven? and yet, this is the spirit of the gospel; and it only happens that a Christian does not, continually, trust in Providence, and, continually, receive every event as a ground of thankfulness, because he is not yet perfect in holiness, or completely sanctified. Of the truth of these positions, respecting Providence, we can satisfy ourselves, and imagine that we can be content in whatsoever state we are placed; but happy is he who abideth the trial, and whose hope is fixed strongly on the God of Israel—nothing shall make him dismayed. Did we reflect, that whenever a man is united to Christ, as every Christian is, he becomes a son of God, a child of a tender and infinitely kind parent, we should conclude, that if this parent be also infinite in power and wisdom, having the world and all that it contains at his command and disposal, then all things must happen for his real good, all things are his, according to the apostle, "whether things present, or things to come, all are his, and he is Christ's, and Christ is God's." Every thing is subservient to his advancement in christian perfection, in faith and love; everything is subservient to his eternal welfare; and every thing is subservient to his temporal comfort and success, so far as is consistent with his future good. Every indulgence is granted him, which he can possibly receive without injury, no chastisement is laid upon him heavier than he can bear, or greater than he absolutely requires; for, in all his afflictions Jesus is afflicted, and there is no more reason to suppose that he will be afflicted unnecessarily, than that Jesus can be afflicted without cause. But, however much we may be convinced of the wisdom and goodness of God, of his faithful conduct towards us, and of our own ignorance respect-

ing what is for our real good, yet, such is the weakness of humanity, that the first trial should upset all our philosophy, did not the Spirit of God strengthen us, and confirm our faith. It becomes us, then, not only to pray for the guidance of the Providence of God, but, also, that in all things he would, by the sanctifying influence of his Spirit, enable us to give him thanks and praise, and to improve every dispensation to our growth in grace.

Observation during a long life enables me to say, that, apart from religious considerations, he acts most wisely who decidedly and unhesitatingly performs the duties of the present, gratefully enjoying its blessings, and humbly, but faithfully, trusting to Providence for the future.

How comfortable and consoling the idea, of a Providence watching over us, in all the changes of life; how dismal and uncertain our state, did not God govern the universe? The belief in a Providence enables us to prosecute our course with steadfastness, to live without harassing anxiety, respecting the present or the future, to give ourselves up to the management of a wise and holy God, with hope and confidence. The more we reflect, the more shall we be persuaded of the value of our Saviour's advice, to seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness required by him, as, a necessary consequence of this must be, the enjoyment of his protection, and the acquisition of all those things we stand in need of. Our security is undoubted, for, as certainly as God is infinite in wisdom, power, and goodness, so certainly shall those who love him, and depend on him, have all things appointed for their good. They may not, indeed, have all that they desire, they may meet with many disappointments, and have many difficulties to overcome, because God may please to strengthen their trust by a trial, and may judge those things to

be good for them, which they dislike. But, still, they may with confidence believe, that every good and necessary gift shall be bestowed upon them, and that, even those misfortunes which are the natural consequence, of their imprudence, or those difficulties which are incident to the station in which God hath placed them, or those afflictions which come upon them, in common with all men, shall work together for their good. Let them seek the favour of God, and use prudently those means he hath appointed, for their support and comfort in this life, and they have no cause to fear the result. But let them also remember, that God is, in all things, to be acknowledged, and his gifts solicited; and, therefore, when they trust to his Providence, they must also pray for his guidance and protection. The people of God are promised food and raiment, but no more: and God will give these in the best way. He hath appointed that all who are able, shall use the means of procuring these by suitable labour; and that those who are unable to work, shall be supplied by others. Those who are idle or thoughtless, can no more claim the promise of supply, than those who throw themselves into a river, can expect not to be wet. But those who use their faculties to the best advantage, shall be provided in food and raiment. It is a part of Christianity to be "not slothful in business;" and they who are Christians may rest assured, that they shall have their wants supplied. Nor need they be afraid, that in sickness, or old age, or in any other circumstances, they shall be left in want. Bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure. Perhaps they may depend on others for even this supply, but yet it shall be given, until it be proper to remove them hence. A Christian, then, who faithfully does his duty, and exercises the faculties God hath given him, may be sure, whether in health

or sickness, to be provided for, because he is under the care of God himself. If he have only the necessities of life, he concludes that more is not good for him, and that the denial is meant to teach him contentment, and wean him from earth. If he receive more than he is promised, if he have the comforts, as well as the necessities of life, he feels an additional cause for gratitude and praise. Safe and confident, indeed, may that man be who trusts in God. He makes frequent application to God, for direction in his judgment, for a blessing on his labours; and he is diligent in these labours, knowing, assuredly, that they shall not be in vain. Earth, he views as a land of pilgrimage—God, as his rod and his staff—Jesus, as his everlasting shepherd, who will safely conduct him to the land of rest and of peace, to the habitation of light and of glory.

IX.

Resignation and Contentment are duties we owe to God, along with trust in his Providence. Contentment is different from resignation, which is an acquiescence in the will of God, but accompanied with a sense of suffering. Contentment is an approbation of our state, as being good and suitable for us. The one leads us to submit calmly, without murmuring, because it comes from an all-wise and merciful God. The other implies, that we have seen that the state is good and proper for us, and are willing to be placed in it. Contentment, then, is a step beyond resignation, for we have come to be satisfied with our condition. It is a duty we owe to God, as it approves of his appointments, and acknowledges his wisdom and kindness. It is also for our own benefit and peace, and the want of it is a mark of folly; for he who is not contented, desires what is not proper for him. He does not view his

lot as the appointment of mercy and wisdom, and as the best for him. It is as unreasonable in a man to be discontented because he has not got wealth or honours, or what he desired, as it would be in him to be displeased because he was not born in another country or in another age, or of different parents. He may no more repine because he has not got what another receives, than a worm may complain that it hath not the gaudy wings of a butterfly, which would only prove its own destruction. If Providence appoint events for the good of mankind, especially of those who are united to Christ, surely we ought to deem that good, which God esteems good, and to be satisfied that we have received a real good in what is sent us. Discontent proceeds from viewing things differently from God, and from raising our expectations and desires too high with regard to this world. As we brought nothing into it, and can carry nothing from it, we ought to be satisfied with little, and, above all, are never to regret that we do not receive those things which we do not take the trouble diligently to seek, or to use the means of obtaining; for this is not merely discontent, but is charging God with our own follies. Food and raiment are promised to the faithful, but nothing more. Instead, then, of being unhappy, because we have not an estate, or an equipage, and are obliged to labour for our daily bread, we ought to be thankful that we have comfortable clothing, sufficient food, health to enjoy it, and a shelter from the weather. Every thing being appointed with unerring wisdom, it becomes the Christian to receive every thing with praise and contentment, to learn, with Paul, in whatever state he is, therein to be contented, and, instead of seeking anxiously for riches, to believe that godliness, with contentment, is great gain. The Philippians were advised to be "careful (that is

anxious) for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." In the epistle to Timothy, we are reminded, that "we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out, and having food and raiment, let us therewith be content." It is in this wise view that Agar prayed, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." Finally, we are exhorted to this duty, from the consideration of the everlasting kindness of the Lord: "Be content with such things as ye have," for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.

X.

Patience is allied to resignation. With regard to ourselves, it implies bearing an evil which is felt, without improper anxiety to get rid of it. With regard to others, it is the same with long-suffering, or bearing with their trespasses. In this view, God is called the God of patience. The first view, is that at present to be taken, for, in the other, patience has already been considered as a relative duty. He who is impatient to acquire some expected benefit, or to get rid of a supposed evil, virtually says, that God withholds the good, or continues the evil, beyond the proper time, and therefore impeaches his wisdom, goodness, and justice. The exercise of patience, the encouragement of a patient disposition, is a strong mean of repressing and destroying anger, repining anxiety, wearying doubts, and peevishness. It makes us support those pains and evils which are personal, and bear with those trials which come from others. As obedience is a test of our love to God, so patience is a proof of our trust in God, and of our conviction that he always acteth well; and as no man can be said to love God, who does not serve him and keep

his commandments, so no one can be said to acknowledge the wisdom and mercy of God, who is not "patient in tribulation," and under all the disappointments of life. Could we see as God sees, we would perceive our state to be the best for us, and did we consider that the will of God is holy, we would also consider, that no creature is holy who does not absolutely conform to that will, and approve of it as holy, wise, and just. How many are peevish and fretful, if not keenly angry, at the changes of weather, or the untowardness of the seasons. Is not this only a concealed mode of attacking the wisdom of God, who hath appointed all things? How many are continually complaining of the hardness of their lot, of the difficulties under which they struggle. Is not this saying, that they have received from God that which is not proper for them, and which is not good enough for them? How many exaggerate their evils, and scarcely confess that they possess any good thing. Is not this saying, that God hath laid upon them more than he actually hath done, or than he hath seen good for them? A Christian bears with patience that which God decrees, but he acknowledges with gratitude the evil God removes, and never endeavours to represent his state as worse than it really is.

XI.

Another essential duty we owe to God, is the observance of those religious ordinances he hath appointed.

Of these, the first to be noticed is prayer. Were a man suddenly deprived of the senses of vision, hearing, and feeling, the faculty of speech alone remaining, he should, in a great measure, be cut off from all knowledge of the world around him, but should still be able to convey to his guardian an intimation of his

wants, and solicit their supply. Without entering into either a minute or extensive comparison, I shall merely say, that this dark and helpless state can give but a faint idea of our relation to the unseen world, and our absolute dependence on God. We have, however, both the privilege and the power of still holding an intercourse with our Creator, and of making known to him our wants and our desires, for he hears our language, and knows even our thoughts. Amidst the darkness and the ignorance in which we are involved, we can still supplicate an unseen, but not a distant God, for all that is necessary, both for the soul and the body, for a restoration of spiritual vision, for an ear to hear the words of the Spirit, and for ability both to feel and to act, to will and to do, and for an ultimate recovery of the lost powers of the soul. Prayer, in its most extended signification, means an address to God, and is not confined to the simple act of supplication or petition. It comprehends also every sentiment which we can offer, in communication with the Deity, such as acknowledgment and adoration of his attributes, thankfulness for his mercies, confession of our sins, dependence on his promises. Generally speaking, prayer may be arranged under the heads of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. Every solemn thought directed to God, every address, however short, and however limited in its subject, is a prayer in one sense, and these will be frequently offered up to God by every Christian. But, besides those aspirations of the heart, which it is proper to offer at all times, there are obligations on every man, at stated periods, on rising and lying down at least, to present to God more comprehensive addresses, or prayer under all its parts. These parts consist in an acknowledgment of the existence, sovereignty, and perfection of God, whose being and attributes we

adore and magnify, expressing our praise and admiration, in contemplating their infinite greatness. An acknowledgment of our entire dependence upon God, and subjection to him, as his creatures, with a profession of our love to him, our desire to obey him, our trust in his promises. A humble confession of our weakness, the corruption of our nature, and our numerous transgressions, together with our persuasion that we merit, thereby, his wrath and indignation. Thankfulness and praise to God for his unmerited mercies, particularly his infinite love in giving his own Son for our salvation, with an acknowledgment of our persuasion, that his work of redemption is complete, and his salvation perfect, and with a profession of our faith in him, as our sufficient Saviour. An earnest request for pardon of all our sins through Christ, for ability to amend our ways, and to have, through the Spirit, sin rooted out of our hearts, and our whole mind so sanctified, as to love, trust, and serve Jesus. A petition for the favour and protection of God here, and the blessings of his providence, with admission hereafter into heaven. Supplication for the good of all mankind, the prosperity of our friends, the forgiveness and advantage of our enemies, and the advancement, in all things, of the glory of God, particularly in the propagation of the gospel. These are the general heads of which prayer consists, and which will be amplified and extended to particular circumstances, according to the state of mind and condition of the Christian. But, at all times, he offers his prayers only through Christ, expects to be heard only for his sake, and acknowledges the aid of the Spirit, which teaches him how to pray, and what things to pray for. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered."

To pray in the name of Christ, is to apply to God,

not in our own person, but through a mediator; and without a mediator, no sinner can approach a holy God. Before the days of Christ, his people approached to God through typical sacrifices, and in their prayers acknowledged, with Daniel, "We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies." But after the rich mercy of God was made manifest in Jesus, men were encouraged to approach to God through him. "Hitherto," says our Saviour, "ye have asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." The man, Jesus Christ, is now in heaven, as our high priest, to present our supplications with acceptance, and to make intercession for us with success; and the apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, argues from this fact, and from the circumstance that Jesus is touched with our infirmities, that "we may come boldly to the throne of grace."

Without the Spirit, no man can pray with hopes of being heard, more than he can, without a mediator. Without the Spirit, the work of Christ should not be complete; for, indeed, to procure the Spirit of God is the end of his sufferings. It is by the Spirit we are sanctified, and without sanctification no man can enter heaven. What says the apostle? "But ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." It is the Spirit which applieth to us the benefits of the redemption wrought by Christ; "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body;" that is, the body of Christ, and made one with him: "we, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." All spiritual gifts and operations are by the Spirit, "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." It is Christ who redeems us; but he does not do so by paying a ransom, and leaving us to

ourselves ; he hath done more, he hath procured by purchase, that which is necessary to complete the work. His sacrifice is the mean or the price, his Spirit dwelling in us, the agent or power ; and the former, without the latter, should be of no avail to us. In this view it is, that the same offices are sometimes applied to Christ, and to the Spirit. We are said to be washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of Christ, and by the Spirit of God. Christ ever liveth to make intercession for us, and the Spirit is said also to make intercession for us. If, then, we are, by Christ, renewed in the Holy Spirit, and made temples for the Holy Ghost, it is evident that all our intercourse with God must be through the Spirit. If Christ, in his human nature, did not act independently of the Spirit, which he possessed “without measure,” but did, through the Eternal Spirit, offer himself a sacrifice for us, surely, we sinful creatures cannot offer our prayers to God, as of ourselves, but must do so by the Spirit which dwelleth in us, as the gift of Christ, and which helpeth our infirmities. This Spirit enables us to understand for what we are to pray, how we are to pray, and excites those affections and graces which are requisite for the proper performance of this duty. We are, therefore, in all our addresses to God, to present them through Christ, and to offer them in the Spirit, making it our earnest desire to obtain the spirit of prayer and of supplication.

With regard to the subject of our prayers, I have already given an outline, and may, therefore, now only make one or two remarks on the advantages to be expected. It ought, I think, to be evident, that he who does not endeavour, by every lawful mean, to obtain that for which he prays, mocks God, and is truly impious. Prayer, therefore, is, or ought to be, a powerful motive to exertion ; and those who

are admonished to pray, are also commanded to watch. As it is necessary to make a penitential confession of our sins to God, it is no less necessary that we endeavour to avoid them in future ; for no man can be truly said to be sorry for that in which he continues to indulge. It is therefore proper, not merely in general terms to confess our guilt, but, after self-examination, to acknowledge and enumerate our particular sins, praying for pardon, and for grace to avoid them in future, and endeavouring, rigidly, to carry this purpose of reformation into effect. There is no more effectual way of improvement, under the blessing of God, than a daily, minute confession of sins, and a daily repentance thereof. By considering the sins which most easily beset us, and the graces in which we are most deficient (for, although in every thing we are most deficient, yet in some things we are more grossly so, than in others), and applying to God for his aid, we are certain of improvement, if we use the means with which we are favoured, and which are requisite to obtain what we profess to desire. When we pray to be delivered from the power as well as the punishment of sin, we certainly must strenuously endeavour to depart from all iniquity. A fervent expression of our gratitude to God for Jesus Christ, and of our dependence on him alone for salvation, is a natural and powerful mean, under God, of increasing our faith, and all the fruits which flow from it. Thanks to God for his unspeakable gift, and sincere profession of our acceptance of Jesus as our Redeemer, and of our reliance on him, must form a principal part of the prayer of every Christian. An acknowledgment of our dependence on the Providence of God for protection and support, with a humble petition that he will continue to provide for us, direct and aid us in every lawful undertaking, and order every thing for his glory and our good,

is another part of prayer, and which naturally requires that in our whole life we should study the means of procuring what we ask, and be resigned to the will of God. We ought always to be very diffident in asking particular temporal advantages, or specifying unto God individual benefits we desire, because we are ignorant of what is good for us. We ought, therefore, to be satisfied with beseeching the blessing of God in our lawful business, and the benefit of his providential care. But although we ought, perhaps, seldom to pray for this or that particular benefit, or temporal possession, yet we are not to be equally general in our petition for aid in trouble, or advice in difficulty, but are to pray for relief from the particular evil, if it be for our good and the glory of God, and to request the direction of his Spirit, and the enlightening of our judgment in the case of difficulty. But let us not be led away by our imagination, in supposing that an answer is, in general, to be given by impressions, or the occurrence of a text of scripture to the recollection. In this, as in other situations, God usually operates by natural means, and we are to look for the answer, in the exercise of the judgment God hath given us, and which, if we exercise, we may expect to be guided by him to that conclusion which is good and proper. In all moral questions we are to look for the answer in the law of God, contained in the scripture, and in the dictates of a well-instructed and good conscience. Whilst we pray for our own spiritual and temporal prosperity, and for patience and support under the evils of life, we must also pray for all mankind, not merely for our friends and benefactors, but also for our enemies. If we be sincere in our prayers, and the contrary is a shocking supposition, there can scarcely be a more effectual way of promoting brotherly love, subduing enmity, and preventing the growth of every unchari-

table affection, than this intercession with God in behalf of others ; because it certainly ought to follow, that if we apply in their behalf to God, we ought, as far as we can, to promote that which we request for them ; and with regard to our enemies, surely if we pray that God would forgive them, we, who are infinitely inferior to God, ought to forgive them from the heart also. When we pray that the glory of God may be promoted, and the kingdom of heaven advanced, surely we ought, personally, to endeavour, as far as we can, to glorify God, and recommend and propagate the gospel of salvation. When we pray that the Spirit of God may be poured out on ourselves and others, we certainly must endeavour to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit and holy affections. When we beseech God to preserve us from the spiritual dangers which surround us, and to keep us unspotted amidst the pollutions of the world, and receive us at length into the heavenly city, surely we must watch against these dangers, endeavour to keep our garments clean, and have our conversation in that heaven to which we look forward.

Those occasional and frequent petitions, and addresses to God, which are offered amidst our meditations, or perhaps our usual employments, will be presented in such language as the sentiment inspires, and proceed from the present impulse of the mind. But in those stated prayers, which ought to be offered at least morning and evening, and which embrace the various objects already mentioned, it is proper, for our greater advantage, to observe five circumstances. The first is that, before prayer, we endeavour, by a portion of scripture, and by devout meditation, for a short time, to abstract our thoughts from the world, and compose them for the occasion. The second is, that we enter upon the duty with a serious and solemn impression of the majesty of that

God whom we are going to address, and the high privilege that we, frail and guilty creatures, possess, in being permitted to approach to him through Jesus. The third is, that we at the time be duly sensible of the necessity of the divine influence, and be earnestly desirous of the aid of the Spirit of prayer. The fourth is, that we endeavour, by exciting powerful ideas of the greatness and perfections of God, to interest the mind, and produce a greater sensibility and fervour in our devotions. For this purpose we cannot do better than employ some of those sublime addresses, uttered by the psalmist or the prophets, which, by the Spirit of God, may be made useful in exciting in our minds, feelings, and ideas, similar to those possessed by the sacred writers. Lastly, we are to be attentive to our thoughts, not observing a mere form, but praying from the heart with earnestness and devotion, feeling all that we express, and humbly and sincerely desirous of all that we request. We must, therefore, pray with understanding as well as with warmth, avoiding not only expressions and phrases used by others, but which we do not understand, but also all unnecessary repetitions, and using our utmost endeavours to have our ideas and requests arranged and prepared. There are advantages and disadvantages attending the use of forms of prayer for private devotion. On the one hand, the composition is made with deliberation and method, on the other hand, the constant repetition of a form, and especially reading it, may allow the mind to wander more easily, whilst the words are repeated by habit. On this subject every one ought to judge by the effects, but it should be remembered that we are apt to employ a form written in the mind, though not on paper, when we day after day repeat the same ideas nearly in the same words, and therefore the same caution must be used as if we employed

a written prayer. Another circumstance to be attended to is, that if a form be employed, it ought to be one of our own composing, as we best know the state of our own mind, and this must likewise be varied, according to our necessities and infirmities. Much has been said with regard to the effects of a form of prayer for public worship. On this subject I hold it evident that extemporary prayer, that is, prayer offered by the minister, without previous composition or deliberation, is an injudicious and unwarrantable dependence on Divine aid, and in many instances will be confused and filled with repetitions. A form, then, must be employed, and the only question is, whether it ought to be one composed privately by the minister, and repeated by him alone, without responses by the congregation, who are supposed to join mentally, as in Scotland, or a printed form, in which the people audibly join, as in England. A Christian may with propriety and edification adopt either of these, but of the two the latter is the best, being the most likely to procure a social, united prayer in the church. A liturgy, formed according to the opinions of any class of men, is one of the best human means of preserving and establishing those opinions, whether true or false. This is well understood by the Socinians, and other enemies of the Church of England, who use every endeavour to alter or get quit of her orthodox service.*

A Christian is not to be satisfied with private prayer, in which he opens his heart to God, nor with public prayer in the church, in which he joins with the congregation, in the worship of God, but is also, morning and evening, to pray with his family. There is scarcely any argument for private or public prayer,

* If the Church of England shall ever forsake her principles, and fall, like the churches of Asia, it is most likely that this event shall be consequent to an adulteration of her liturgy.

which will not apply to family prayer. It is a mean of promoting religion in the family, of propagating the knowledge of God, and of bringing down a blessing on the house. It communicates to every member of the family, and particularly to children and domestics, a reverence for God, and keeps up a sense of his presence and protection. There are only two objections which can be offered, want of time, and shame. A very short time, indeed, is required, a portion which can easily be snatched from trifling pursuits; and, as to the second objection, I should be sorry to think that any Christian was ashamed of serving his God, or counted it as dishonourable to be publicly known as a follower of Jesus.

To conclude this subject, it has been objected against praying at all, that, as God is acquainted with our wants, and disposed from his goodness to relieve them, we need neither make them known, nor request their relief. As prayer is expressly enjoined in the scripture, and has, in every age, been employed, there can be no necessity for refuting this objection, to those who admit the authority of the word of God. I may merely observe, that there is no reason why we should not ask what we desire, more than express our love, and thankfulness, and trust, for God knoweth the one as well as the other. This principle would strike at the root of all religious worship, and of all intercourse with God whatever. We do not pray to remind God of what we require, or to inform him of what we want, but as an acknowledgment that from him cometh every thing, and that he hath power to give and withhold. It is the mean appointed by him, for obtaining what we want, and is a practical confession of our relation to him as his creatures. It is as certainly to be employed, as the natural means are, for obtaining the supply of our wants under providence. As we have nothing in our own power, it is

suitable and proper that we supplicate him who hath every thing in his power. The very expression of our sentiments of trust and praise, the enumeration of our wants, and the confession of our sins, have a good effect on the mind, by increasing our dependence on, and our love to, God. But we do not require to argue in favour of prayer, from the nature of the thing itself; we have both the command of God, and the example of Christ, to convince us. Jesus “spake a parable to them, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;” and the scope of this certainly is, that we ought to be earnest and importunate in our petitions. We are not to be anxious and importunate regarding those things, the effect of which we do not know, as for instance, temporal advantages, but are to qualify our request with the provision, if it be for the glory of God, and our good. Respecting spiritual gifts, we are more certain, though we cannot presume to determine, what degree of joy and communion with God, may be good for our souls. But for an increase of faith, love, and obedience, we may safely and earnestly pray. Our Lord not only gave his disciples a form of prayer, but prayed frequently and earnestly himself; and in his agony, before his crucifixion, he gave us a powerful example of the way in which we ought to pray. In that awful extremity, when he was sore amazed, and sorrowful, even unto death, he prayed that if it were possible, in any other way to accomplish redemption, and glorify God, it might be done, but immediately added, that he submitted to the will of God, his heavenly Father, and acknowledges that he came, in his human nature, for the express purpose of offering himself a sacrifice. “Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? but for this cause, came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.” “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me,

nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." Behold the blessed Redeemer, him who had the Spirit without measure, praying for preservation from suffering, but at the same moment, sincerely and fervently resigning himself to the will of his Father. We, like him, are not to be backward to suffer, nor eager to gain enjoyment, without regard to the will of God, but in all things, must seek his glory, and obey his will. Our Lord, whilst he prayed himself, urged his disciples also to pray, that they might be supported, and enabled to fulfil their part, and admonished them to watch as well as pray; that is, to use diligently the means of obtaining what they desire, of avoiding the sin and evil, which they pray to be delivered from. "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." The saints in the Old Testament, were men of prayer, and though of like passions with ourselves, their prayers were heard. The saints of the New Testament were likewise men of prayer, exhorted by the apostle to "continue in prayer," and to "pray without ceasing."

The next appointment to be observed, is the sanctification of the Sabbath. The Sabbath was instituted as a commemoration of the completion of creation, after which God is said to have rested from his labour, the work being accomplished. It was, therefore, to be a day of complete rest, in which no works, excepting those of necessity and mercy, were to be done. The appointment is contained fully in the fourth commandment, and the reason is there assigned. But, whenever the work of redemption was accomplished, then, as that involved the fate of creation, the day was changed, the remembrance of the lesser, being comprehended in that of the greater, event. For, had there been no Redeemer, the destroyer had succeeded in

undoing the work of God; and the means of restoration were infinitely greater than those of creation, being nothing less than the sacrifice of the Son of God, the Being who created all things. As our Lord rose from the dead on the first day of the week, that day was, immediately after, kept holy by his disciples, as a commemoration of the resurrection, and the complete termination of the glorious work. Jesus, then, might be said to rest from his labour of redemption, as God was said to have rested on the seventh day, from the work of creation. And as men were formerly to remember the Sabbath, as an acknowledgment of their relation to God, as his creatures, and the obedient workmanship of his hands, so were they now to observe the Lord's day, as an acknowledgment of their relation to him, as redeemed creatures. As Jesus then entered into his rest, so are they who are united to him, to enter into a christian rest, of which this is symbolical. In the third and fourth chapters of the epistle to the Hebrews, Paul considers this rest, which belongs to those who are "partakers of Christ," and the scope of his reasoning is to show, that "there remaineth a rest," or, as it is also translated, a keeping of Sabbath "for the people of God." This rest is not heaven, though that indeed is an everlasting rest, but it is an admission from the law into the gospel, from the fruitless attempt to seek salvation by our own righteousness, into the rest given by Christ. "He that hath entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." The Lord's day, then, is commemorative of the christian rest, procured by Jesus, and is to be devoted to the purposes of christian rest. The Sabbath appears, originally, to have been commemorative of an event, in which man was entirely passive, and which was completely past. It was an acknowledgment of God as a Creator, and an anticipation of

christian rest, whilst the sacrifices were types of the mean by which this was to be obtained. But, when Christ finished the work of redemption, there was not only a new object of remembrance added, but, we are to remember, an event, in which we are not altogether passive, and in which we, through Christ, are made partakers. For being united to him, and made part of his body, we do commemorate our own entrance with him into rest. The Jews commemorated their creation and acknowledged their Creator in the Sabbath by a strict state of rest. We remember our creation, but more especially our emancipation, our deliverance, which was proved to be complete by the resurrection of our Lord. This view points out how the Sabbath is to be observed, which is by such a degree of rest as shall accord with the original purpose, which is not abrogated, and by such thankfulness, spiritual joy, and devotion, as shall celebrate our deliverance, and increase that faith which is declared to be the entrance into the christian rest. It is to be observed in such a manner as to promote the object of the Redeemer's work, and recall to mind, without the interference of secular concerns, that plan of salvation in which we all are interested. It is to be set apart for preparing for that glorious state opened to our view by the resurrection of Jesus. It is therefore not a fast, but a spiritual feast; not a gloomy day, but a day of hope and gladness. It is a day appointed for the public worship of God, for edification in the doctrines and duties of our holy religion, for a general thanksgiving for the Redeemer. It is therefore the duty of every one to observe the Sabbath by a regular attendance in church, and by solemnly joining in the worship of God. No excuse can be admitted for the neglect of this duty, except that of absolute necessity. Dislike to the minister, or a conceit that the same or greater

benefit may be derived from the private reading of the scriptures as from the public preaching of the gospel, are very futile excuses. If the minister do not preach the gospel faithfully, so much the more dreadful for himself; but that is no authority for our "forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." We can join in prayer and praise, and surely may derive some advantage from the sermon, especially if we pray earnestly for the blessing of God upon it. Whether we consider the positive command of God, the nature of the thing itself, the effect on ourselves, or the influence of our example on others, and the responsibility which thus falls upon us, we must admit the necessity of a regular attendance at public worship. Nor is this all. The Sabbath and its duties must be prepared for on its eve by fervent prayer then, and in the morning of that blessed day, for the influence of the Spirit on the preacher and the hearer, and for grace to profit by all the ordinances of the church. Were more diligent preparation made, and more supplication offered for the power of the Spirit on the minister and whole congregation, how much greater should be the blessing on public worship.

Could that veil be withdrawn, which hides the spiritual world from mortal eyes, how glorious and amazing a scene should be seen in an assembled church. Or, were a saint of God to be suddenly called hence, from a worshipping congregation, should not he see the whole house filled with those bright and holy angels, who acted as ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation. Perhaps many departed saints might be permitted there to behold the worship of their lingering friends, and share in the service of the angels toward them. But one more glorious and endeared object should rivet the attention, Jesus, the Son of God, present by his Spirit, in the midst of

the church, and commanding a blessing on the ordinance. Yet, ah! amidst this glorious and beatific multitude, and even in the presence of the Holy High Priest of his people, there is to be seen a throng of the spirits of darkness, the enemies of God and man, and these should not be found idle or unconcerned, but busily employed in stupifying and destroying the souls of men. Amidst this spiritual struggle between the angels of light and the powers of darkness, for the salvation or destruction of mortals, might be beheld the live coal from the altar, touching the souls of many, preserving them from the power of their adversary, and bestowing peace, and joy, and good hope of salvation. And could the disembodied spirit, now admitted to behold these wondrous things, and to hear those words of praise, which Paul, when he returned from the third heaven to earth, could not repeat, still, at the same time, listen to the words of the preacher, he should find, that amidst all the variation of language he employed, the address to every individual was this impressive sentence, "I have a message from God to *thee*," a message of peace and of pardon, a message of entreaty or admonition, an earnest and merciful call, to accept of a Saviour, an offer of free and unreserved grace and reconciliation. Whatever were the portion of Scripture read, or whatever the prayer presented, or the praise offered, or whatever the discourse of the preacher, the great and divine Teacher, by his Spirit, sends to each and to all, the message of repentance, and remission of sins. And could this soul still contemplate the appearance, and know aught of the circumstances and thoughts of the surrounding hearers, how astonished should he now be at the indifference of even the best of those whom he had just quitted, and how amazed at his own former coldness toward Him, whom he now knows to have done so much for him.

With what delight would he sympathize with any one heart, which, even for a moment, was warmed with more than earthly love to the blessed Jesus, or which rejoiced with a heavenly joy, in communion with a present, though unseen Saviour. But, alas! should he not also see some altogether careless and indifferent in this holy assembly, with vacant look, and listless mind, wandering over all the vanities of time, and of the world. How would he pity their infatuation, and lament to behold, still farther, that effort, which, unperceived by them, was made by the powers of darkness around them, to stupify and bewilder their minds, and make them deaf to the message sent to them, regardless of Him in whose awful presence they were, and of the mercy pressed upon them. And should he not see the compassionating angels around them, and One still more compassionate than the angels, deploring, that in this the day of their merciful visitation, they were, with contentment and self-approbation, committing the great and perilous crime of lightly esteeming the sufferings of their Redeemer. There may, perchance, be some to whom the message of grace and peace is sent for the last time. Jesus offers himself *once* more, and it is in the book of remembrance recorded, that at this time, and in this place, was freely, and earnestly, and unreservedly, tendered the gift of reconciliation, which was rejected. Time after time it had been presented. In public and in private, by the ordinances of the Sabbath, through the medium of sufferings of the body, and afflictions of the mind, it had been repeatedly offered, and is now again made; but the day of mercy is closing, and the spirits of the just, though ignorant of the designs of God, may well fear that the decree hath now gone forth, "Let him alone, he hath joined himself to idols." There may also be some one, who, contrary to his usual custom,

has this day come to church, or may have been led to this particular assembly, and may have, unknown to all around him, and unexpectedly by himself, had specially directed to him this message, "Come unto me and be saved." One sorrowful heart may be saying, there is no message for me, my day of grace is past, and I, alas! have neither part nor lot in this matter. The exhortations and the consolations of the preacher are listened to in vain, but an unseen hand touches the mourner, and a voice, unheard by others, pronounces the joyful intelligence, that Christ came into the world to save sinners, and a quickening and comforting Spirit pours, in the house of God, a healing balm into the wounded soul.

But joining in the public worship of God, is only a part of the duty of the Sabbath. It is the practice with some to attend at church in the morning, and to amuse themselves during the rest of the day, or spend it in idleness, visiting, perhaps in the sports of the field, or in gambling and dissipation. Even many of the more decent part of the community think themselves at liberty to spend the afternoon and evening in the same manner as on another day, with the exception of cards. But we are to sanctify the Sabbath, and not a part of the Sabbath, and there is no argument for employing a part of the day in such a way as shall improve the mind in religious knowledge, and raise the affections to God, which does not apply to the employment of the whole day in the same way. The duty which belongs to that part of the day, not spent in church, consists in the private exercise of devotion, in the acquirement of that knowledge, the cultivation of those principles which promote our christian progress, and in the most important business of communicating religious instruction to our children and family. Setting aside all other considerations, the

appointment of the Sabbath must be useful in consecrating a portion of time to the more serious performance of the duties of religion, and a more careful preparation for heaven. Were this left to men themselves, it is much to be feared that it would be altogether neglected, and that every day would be spent alike, that is, principally in the cares and pleasures of the world. It is, therefore, a most merciful institution, by which men are abstracted, for a season every week, from the troubles and vanities of this life, and are relieved, for a day, from its fatigues and labours. We accordingly see the force of what was said by Jesus, who declared himself to be "Lord of the Sabbath." "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." He was not created to perform certain services on that day, or to observe it in a particular manner, thereby glorifying God. But it was appointed, for his benefit, that the suspension of his labour might give rest to his body, and the exercises of religion, strength to his mind, and that, thereby, the glory of God might be promoted. These words of our Lord point out clearly the intention of the Sabbath, that it is for the benefit of man, as a creature of God, and an heir of immortality. Surely, then, they do not sanctify the Sabbath, and turn it to their greatest advantage, who neglect public worship, who spend the day in idleness or sleep, or in amusements, or in transacting business, or arranging their books and affairs, or in feasting, or travelling, either for pleasure or upon business. Some of these modes are chiefly injurious to ourselves. Some are injurious to others, by depriving our servants and families of the means of religious instruction and improvement, or of that rest which God hath given to them, whilst, even the brute creation is made, by travelling, to lose that relief from toil, which humanity ought to grant, and which

God hath ordained for them. These observations, however, do not go to assert, that a man is to be shut up in his chamber, or with his family, alone, on the Sabbath. There is no impropriety in receiving the visits of an intimate friend, or of those in dependent situations, who are engaged during all the rest of the week, provided that no unusual trouble be thereby given to the servants, and that they be not kept from church, and that the conversation be religiously edifying. Neither is there any impropriety, in those who are confined to sedentary employments during the week, taking the benefit of retired walking on the Sabbath, if the mind be well employed, for the thoughts may be as much directed to heaven, in the fields as in the house. On this matter, however, every one must well consider, how far his example may encourage others to idle strolling, and how far he acts right in going abroad. One thing is clear, that frequenting public walks can, on no good principle, be justified. In all things, there is more hazard in going beyond, than in keeping within, the limit declared by conscience, to be consistent with the purpose, for which the Sabbath was vouchsafed to man. Lastly, the Sabbath is not sanctified by those who peruse books of amusement, or even of instruction, which have no relation to religion. This is not a day for studying mathematics, history, or philosophy, though all of these may improve the mind in knowledge. Nor is it a day for holding meetings, to converse on learned, far less on frivolous, subjects, neither of which promote the grand designs for which the Sabbath was made for man. The Sabbath was given to man in mercy—in mercy both to body and soul. It is a day for thankful remembrance of the resurrection of our Lord, and of his triumph over death, and him who had the power of death. It is a day of gladness, a day set apart from the world,

for the purposes of heaven, a day, in which the disciples of Jesus come and behold the place where he lay, and rejoice in the fulness, and the perfection, of his atonement. It is a day, which they devote to his service, by remembering all that he did for them on earth, and meditating on what he is still doing for them in heaven. It is a stated day of refreshment, in their journey through the world, when they withdraw from its cares, and connect themselves, more closely, with that happy eternity, on which they hope to enter. It is as much the privilege, as it is the duty, of man to consecrate the Sabbath, to purposes specially connected with the ground of its institution. I know not any argument which can be brought forward, in support of alienating this day, from the purpose for which it was bestowed, and transferring it to the service of this world, and mere temporal pursuits, however innocent, and even useful, these may abstractly be. There is a time for every thing, and God has given, in his mercy, this day to man, in connexion with the work of redemption. Every one ought to inquire, whether he be employing this precious gift in the manner intended, and whether engaging in the works of commerce, the labours of literary study, the amusement of light reading, be devoting this day to a commemoration of redemption, and a preparation for the abode of the redeemed.

We are not only to sanctify the Sabbath ourselves, but be careful that our children, and every member of our family, observe it also. It is peculiarly our duty, to train up our children, in a reverence for the Sabbath, both by precept and example, and we never ought, intentionally, to place either them, or ourselves, in situations, where we are sure, that the Sabbath must be dishonoured. The connexion between good conduct, not to say a religious principle, and the observance of the Sabbath, is so striking, that

this consideration alone ought to determine every one to keep up, as far as he can, a respect for that day. Nor ought it to be forgotten, that of those who have been notorious for their profligacy, or brought to public punishment for their crimes, the greatest number have acknowledged that the first step to their unhappy conduct, consisted in profaning the holy Sabbath.

There are certain days, particularly the anniversary of the birth, and the death of our Saviour, which it is desirable to observe as holy. There is, indeed, no express command on this subject, in the New Testament. The observance, as far as authority goes, must rest on the practice of Christians at an early period. But the greatest enemies of the practice must admit, that there is no injunction in scripture against it, whilst, from the nature of the thing, much may be said in its favour. If a dear and valued friend, one to whom we owed life, and all its enjoyments, one to whom we were bound by ties of gratitude and affection, strong beyond the power of language to express, were taken from us, could we coldly thrust from us the proposal of thinking more particularly on our friend, on the anniversary of his death? Shall we lightly esteem those solemn times, which ought more strongly to bring before us, the great love of the Redeemer, or, on that day commemorative of his precious death, neglect to meet christian disciples, for the purpose of contemplating with holy awe and love, the work of Christ.* On the nativity, how many offer praise in the morning, and spend the evening in festivity. They are more consistent, who disregard the day altogether.

The next ordinances to be considered, are the sacraments, consisting of Baptism and the Lord's

* See Christian Fragments, No. xlv., *Holy days*.

Supper. A sacrament is a symbol or a sensible sign and representation of some spiritual benefit, or mean of salvation, at the same time that it, also, becomes a solemn avowal, on the part of the participant, of his engaging to serve the Lord, and accept of his grace. Indeed, it is from this last purpose, that the name is given, *sacramentum* being the word chiefly used for the oath of allegiance taken by soldiers. The sacraments of the Jews were circumcision and sacrifices, which marked them as a peculiar people, and typified the mystery of redemption. The sacraments of the christian church are not bloody, the precious blood of Jesus having now actually been shed. As baptism is an ordinance, in which we participate in infancy, it is not necessary to enforce it here, as a duty to be observed, it being understood to have been performed towards us, by our parents already. I shall, therefore, pass over this subject, with merely stating, that the sacrament of baptism represents our being buried with Christ. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him, by baptism, into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so, we also should walk in newness of life." It represents the washing of the soul from sin, by the blood of Christ; for, those who are baptized, are "baptized in the name of Christ, for the remission of sins," who is said to have loved the church, and given himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of the water, by the word, in order to present it blameless and without spot. It represents the union of the soul to Christ, and its forming a part of his spiritual body. "For, by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." It represents the regeneration, and consequently sanctification, by the Spirit, being saved, not by works

of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, "by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." It represents our resurrection unto life. "For, if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." "The like figure, whereunto (viz. Noah "saved by water") even baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Baptism, then, is not merely an admission into the christian church, not merely being made a member of the church on earth, but is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, and of our being united to Christ, and, consequently, made partakers of the benefits of his death and resurrection. It superseded "the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith" which Abraham had, and continues, for ever, to be a sign of our adoption into the number of the children of God. "For ye are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

It becomes parents and sponsors to consider the solemn obligations they come under before God, to perform the promise, of educating children in the knowledge of the Lord; and, as they have been admitted members of the visible church, endeavouring to make them also seek to become members of the body of Christ.

It becomes every one, arrived at the years of discretion, to take the vows, made at baptism, on himself, and renew his covenant with the Lord. He ought to consider seriously the ends for which Christ instituted this sacrament, and what it represents, and endeavour, by earnest prayer, through faith, to obtain those blessings signified and sealed to him in that institution, and which I have briefly mentioned. Let

him recollect, that if he be dead with Christ, then he is no longer to live unto himself. If he be buried with Christ, he is, with him, to rise to newness of life. If he be washed in the laver of regeneration, let him take care to keep himself unspotted amidst the pollutions of the world. If he be baptized into Christ, let him be conformed to his image, and derive all his strength, for overcoming sin and promoting holiness, from the death and resurrection of Christ.

The other sacrament in the christian church is the Lord's Supper. This was instituted by our Redeemer, on that night in which he was betrayed. He appointed bread and wine, to be used as a commemoration of his broken body and shed blood, as a remembrance of his sacrifice, and of his atonement. During a long course of ages, innocent victims had been sacrificed as an expiation of human guilt, and which were acceptable to God, and useful to man, only in so far as they were types of that sacrifice which Christ was to offer for sin. The period had now arrived when these were to be consummated, in the event which they anticipated. All things were prepared, and the night had now set in which had been foretold by many prophets, and appointed by God from the beginning of the world. Jesus was to make a voluntary and complete expiation for sin, and the sacrifices of innocent animals were now to cease. Their blood was not now required to sprinkle the sinner, for the blood of Jesus, which it represented, was on the morrow to be shed. A new ordinance was instituted by Christ, not to be a type of what was to follow, but a commemoration of the glorious event, to the latest period of time. It was intended to show forth the Lord's death, and is an acknowledgment on the part of the communicant, of his reliance on the atonement made by Jesus, and of his persuasion that it alone can save him from punish-

ment. He rests with confidence on the perfect obedience yielded by Christ in his stead. He also believes, that as he partakes of the symbols of the body and blood of Jesus, so is it necessary to his salvation that he be a partaker of the body of Christ, being united to him, and animated with his Spirit, by whom he is truly sanctified. He likewise professes, that as bread and wine are nutriment to the body, and impart vigour unto it, so, through that bread which came down from heaven, he only can derive spiritual strength, and the cordial comfort of the Spirit. He professes his sincere and fervent desire to be saved, by the grace of God, in that way which infinite wisdom and mercy hath appointed ; and he solemnly accepts of the offer of salvation, through Christ, and devotes himself to his service. The sacrament, in itself, is no efficacy, for it may be partaken of by a wicked man, without making him better. It is only useful to those who celebrate it with knowledge, humility, faith, and love, and to them it is only useful, by the blessing of God upon it. The Christian celebrates this ordinance, not merely as a profession of entire reliance on the sacrifice of Christ, of exclusive dependence on what he hath done, and is still doing in heaven ; but also as a eucharist, a thankful remembrance of the great love of his Saviour dying for him, an expression of deep and lively gratitude for the great redemption through the cross, and of joyful hope of the glory of eternity.

The passover amongst the Jews bore the nearest resemblance to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, for it commemorated a deliverance, but it was a deliverance by blood, that house alone being safe on which the blood of the paschal lamb was found. Christians remember, in this institution, their deliverance, and that it was accomplished only by blood. Jews and Christians agree in this, that without shed-

ding of blood there is no remission of sin. The Jew, who trusted for acceptance and forgiveness, without the blood of atonement, and the Christian, who hopes for salvation without the sacrifice of Christ, are both equally deluded. No man can expect to be saved in any other way than on account of the obedience and sufferings of Jesus Christ; and the sacrament is expressly appointed as a profession of this belief, and is to the Christian a most solemn and indispensable duty. He is, at all times, to be animated with faith in the sacrifice of Jesus; but in this ordinance, he more solemnly declares, before men, spirits, and God, his sole reliance on the perfect work of Christ, and his fixed desire to become his true disciple. The celebration of this sacrament is not optional, for it is binding on every Christian. It was the dying command of Jesus, that it should be observed, and it was the anxious desire of his followers to observe it frequently. It is deeply to be regretted, that in many congregations this ordinance is seldom administered, in too many, not above twice in a year. Did the apostles and saints of old rest satisfied with this? No: they rejoiced in frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper. Saints, at all times, have rejoiced in the frequent observance of this ordinance. If it be inquired who are to observe it, I reply, all who are Christians. There is no exception; it was a general and positive command. The appointment is, "do this in remembrance of me."—He, then, who is a Christian, must observe it, and he who doth not observe it is not a Christian, and doth not love Him, who said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." A Christian is not merely to keep the commandments contained in the moral law, and to maintain a general principle of love and obedience, but he is to observe every ordinance appointed by God. Surely, this command, given

under deep sorrow, though with assured confidence of final triumph, just as our Lord was about to enter upon his last sufferings, his atoning sacrifice, and which relates to an ordinance which so manifestly expresses the great doctrines of salvation, cannot be neglected by any one who professes to love Jesus, and to be called by his name. But it may be urged, that this is an ordinance instituted for disciples, and, therefore, that none, who are not of the household of faith, dare partake of it. Now, if this be brought forward by any man as an excuse, I would have him consider, that he who is not of the household of faith, never shall be admitted into heaven; and, therefore, he professes his belief that he shall not enter into that blessed place.

He who lightly esteems the Lord's Supper, and who does not partake of it, either from indifference, or from a sense of his having no active desire to be a Christian, does afford convincing proof, that he has no hope of heaven; not that this sacrament is of any virtue in itself, or is a viaticum or passport to heaven, but because his state of mind is as opposite to that required for heaven, as it is for participating in the Lord's Supper. I would wish every man seriously to consider this fact; and if he be convinced that he cannot safely approach the Lord's table, it is indeed time that he begin a preparation. Who, then, are invited, nay, commanded, to celebrate this ordinance? I reply, all who believe that Jesus is the Saviour of sinners; all who have faith in him as their Redeemer. But how shall a man know if he have that living, active faith, which is distinguished from simple assent to evident truth? I answer, by its producing love; and he will know whether he love God and Christ, not only by his consciousness of his own affections, but also by his anxiety to serve God; for Jesus himself hath given this test, "If ye love me, keep

my commandments." The question, then, may be answered by every one who examines his own heart and inclinations. He must know, whether he feel love to God, and a desire, from that principle, to serve him. He may be sensible of the great coldness of his affection, the truly imperfect state of his service, the innumerable breaches of the holy law of God. But yet, amidst all these humbling circumstances, he does, nevertheless, feel love to God; and, however feeble it may be, he may not, without untruth, deny it, but can say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." While he says so, the sense of his unworthiness, and the languor or coldness of his affection, penetrate him so, that he almost doubts whether he hath not deceived himself, by a momentary impulse, when he uttered that appeal; but still he does feel that he hath a spark of love, and, by the grace of God, he obtains the witness of the Spirit of God within him, that he is not deceived. For, the view he hath of his languid affection, is accompanied with a desire to God that it might be otherwise; and his prayer, through Christ, is not unanswered, but the Spirit of love himself animates with more or less fervour the praying soul. Weakness of faith, coldness of love, a sense of sin, are no objections to the participation of this ordinance. It is a mean of strengthening faith, exalting love, and, as to the sense of sin, it will not, indeed, diminish that, but it will show the remedy, and convince the sinner of its divine efficacy and power. There is a general command, or universal invitation, "whosoever will, let him come." Let no man absent himself, unless he be determined to stay away from heaven also. Whatever his past life may have been, however weak his faith, let him prepare for this sacrament, and come humbly to the table of the Lord. If he appear with earnest prayer, with humility of heart,

and a knowledge of the nature of the institution, and the comfortable doctrines it teaches, he shall, by the blessing of God, find here his faith increased, his love animated, his desire to serve God strengthened, and every good sentiment confirmed. The very reason which keeps back a sinner who is not insensible of his sin, and of the way of escaping from its power, and from its punishment, is that which ought to draw him forward. For, he comes to remember Jesus, who died for even the chief of sinners, who is able to save, unto the uttermost, all who come unto him, and who will in no wise reject any who come. He here contemplates, more nearly, that astonishing mean by which he is redeemed, and, surely, cannot expect to apply to the fountain of mercy, through Jesus, under more favourable circumstances to himself, than when he is fulfilling the dying injunction of his Lord, and beseeching forgiveness and sanctification over the symbols of the broken body and shed blood of his Redeemer.

As Jesus came not into the world to call the righteous, but sinners, so his ordinances are not instituted for those who are satisfied with their own goodness, but for those who are sensible of their wickedness, and their need of a Saviour. All who desire to be saved by Jesus are invited to remember him, and no wedding garment is required, but that of faith in his redemption. All who believe in Jesus, as a Saviour, and whose belief is so sincere and active as to influence the will and the heart, to produce love, and an endeavour to obey the law of God, in a dependence on the assistance and sanctifying influence of his Spirit, may partake of this ordinance, nay, are commanded to partake of it.

As it is an ordinance of peculiar solemnity, instituted under most impressive circumstances, and, with the blessing of God, of great benefit to the soul, it is

the duty of every one to prepare for the celebration of it, that he may derive the expected advantage. Now, in doing so, his first and great object, is to obtain a just notion of the evil of sin, and its extreme hatefulness in the sight of God. He must consider, that as God is infinite in purity and holiness, so his hatred to sin must also be infinite, and, consequently, great beyond the power of imagination to conceive. His next object is, to possess a just opinion of his own nature, and of the sinfulness of his heart. He is to consider the original depravity of his nature, and the repeated and innumerable transgressions he hath been guilty of, and, especially, his want of love to God, who is infinitely worthy of it. Let him then reflect, that if sin be infinitely hateful to God, he, as a sinner, must be so also, and be obnoxious to his wrath and indignation; and surely, if any thing can humble the pride of man, and cut down his hopes of being saved by his own acts, it must be the reflections which arise from this view of the nature of sin, and its personal application to himself. If these do not make him cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner," nothing else can. It is in this state of mind, that he beholds with peculiar eagerness the sacrifice offered on Mount Calvary. It is in the darkness with which he is surrounded, in the deep abasement in which his soul is plunged, that he hails with transport the glorious light of the gospel, and welcomes the gracious offers of salvation, and forgiveness, through the blood of Jesus. From the contemplation of his own guilt, then, he is led to an earnest consideration of the means by which he is saved, even by the grace of God in giving him a Saviour. His mind fixes on Jesus, and he beholds him as a priest, as a prophet, as a king. Through faith in Jesus, he lays firm hold on the hope of salvation. He believes, that he is able to deliver him, from the love and dominion

of sin, as well as from its punishment, and, by his Spirit, to enlighten and sanctify his soul. He examines his own heart, looks into it, for the purpose of knowing his errors, and reforming his life. He makes humble, and full confession of all his guilt, to his heavenly Father, beseeching his forgiveness through Christ, and his grace to avoid sin hereafter. It is, by dwelling on the doctrines of the gospel, that he is filled with contrition for his sin, an earnest hatred to it, and a desire to live in holiness, that he sees the necessity of a Redeemer, and that Jesus is the Redeemer suited to his necessities. The consideration of what he hath done, and promises to do for him, fills his soul with faith, love, and hope; and, with a thankful humble heart, he commemorates that event, on which he places his sole reliance. With this, he joins most earnest and frequent prayer, for the sanctifying, and strengthening, influences of the Divine Spirit, and in all his meditations, in all his reflections and preparations, his thoughts arise to God in prayer, and his expectations are from his Holy Spirit. He goes to the Lord's table, to acknowledge there his sin and misery—his desert of punishment. He goes, to offer his grateful thanks, for the Saviour who is given to him, to express his belief, that he can only be saved by Jesus, and that Jesus is able, and willing, to save him from all his transgressions. He goes, to profess his reliance on Him alone, and to devote himself solemnly to Him, as one of his redeemed people. He goes to solicit his promised Spirit, and to pray for strength, to finish his period of probation. He goes, as a guilty creature, to beseech pardon—as a weak creature, to seek for strength—as a miserable creature, to obtain comfort—as a dying creature, to look for immortality. He goes, in obedience to Christ's command, but he goes willingly, and with thankfulness, and with a

hope and expectation of being revived, and strengthened, and comforted in his spiritual warfare, and feels that he cannot too often obey his Lord in resembling him. He goes, to profess his cordial faith in, and to feel the truth of, all the doctrines relating to salvation. He goes, to receive Christ as his Saviour, to give himself to him as a willing subject. He goes, to be made one with Christ, to live in Him, and by Him, and to receive through Him, the Holy Spirit, that he may obtain spiritual gifts, and bear the fruit of his Spirit. As Jesus, in his intercessory prayer, addressed the Father, saying, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one"—"that they also may be one in us," so, he goes to obtain this blessing through faith, and that God the Father may love him as a child, seeing, he is united to Christ, who prayed for this paternal love, "that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them." All these blessings, he goes to the Lord's table to partake of, not that he receives them, there, for the first time, or, that he receives them on account of any virtue in the sacrament itself; but he has them, there, renewed to him, and has his faith increased, and his love exalted, by the blessing of God, upon an ordinance, which so immediately represents, the grand and sole foundation of all his hope—the death of Jesus Christ. He who partakes of this ordinance, without reverence, without faith and love—he who is ignorant of the doctrines of the gospel, and whose life is not influenced by its principles—he who receives not Jesus, as his only Saviour, and gives not himself to Him, as his faithful, loving, obedient subject, eateth and drinketh unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body, and bringeth judgment, instead of blessing, on himself.

It is the desire of a Christian, to have at the Lord's

table, more clear, lively, and impressive views of the love of God, and his obligations to him; to have, thereby, his faith increased, by the influence of the Spirit, and to obtain, thus, greater strength for the remainder of his journey. But these advantages are not always proportioned to the keenness of the feeling. Some, enjoy feelings of love, gratitude, and joy, which almost overpower them, which fill the whole soul and heart, and bring tears into the eyes. At another time, these same persons, partake of this ordinance with less feeling, perhaps with so little, that they fear, from the coldness of their affections, that their love is almost gone. But let no man judge of the state of his soul, merely, by the acuteness of his feelings at a particular time. Let him not, on the one hand, trust to the strength of the passions, nor, on the other, be discouraged, though his heart do not burn within him. I have, in a former part of this work, considered devotional feeling, and the influence of the passions on religion; and, therefore, on the present occasion, I shall only add, that although faith always produce good fruit, yet, it does not, uniformly, bring forth the same fruit. It may not, at this particular time, produce "joy unspeakable, and full of glory;" but it will produce, a steady reliance on the promise of God, to give eternal life, through Jesus. How the prospect of that life, and of the means by which it hath been procured to man, may affect the mind, depends not only on a variety of circumstances, connected with the previous, and present, state of the mind, but also, on the influence of the Spirit of God, who alone can give communion with the Trinity. There are cordial moments of rejoicing, there are happy feelings of warm love and attachment; but let not those, who have not enjoyed these, at the Lord's table, become desponding; for, a calm, steady hope and dependence, on the power

of Christ, is as much a work of the Spirit, as those keen devotional feelings are, the absence of which they regret. If these be withheld, it is for some good purpose: and, in particular, a languor of affection, calls for greater diligence, and more earnest prayer. It calls for a more serious consideration of the evil of sin, and more careful examination of our guilt, by which we see, more strongly, the necessity of the interference of Christ. A true picture of our own depravity and weakness, on the one hand, and of the price paid for our salvation, on the other, must, if the soul earnestly pray for this salvation, and the benefits which accompany it, produce love and gratitude; "for to whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much." The coldness of our love, and, by consequence, the languor of our affections, proceed from the deceitfulness of sin, which appears less terrible and deformed than it really is. If the load have not been great, from which we are relieved, if the danger do not appear extreme, from which we have been delivered, it is not to be wondered, that we should not feel much love and gratitude. If the mind be engrossed, with worldly schemes and temporal desires, it is not amazing that the soul should not be animated with joy, in the hope of heaven. Let those, then, who desire communion with God, pray earnestly for the Spirit of Christ, that they may see their guilt, and form just notions of the danger of sin, of the way of life, and of the superiority of eternity over time.

Christ, was the Paschal Lamb, and the atoning sacrifice, which gave all the Mosaic institutions life and efficacy. Having no need himself of atonement, it may be asked, with what spirit, and in what view, did he conform to the law, and partake of the pass-over. The command to do so was imperative on every Jew, and, therefore, as a mark of obedience to

the law, and conformity to the will of God, he fulfilled all that was required. But, besides this reason, was not there one peculiar to himself, namely, testifying, thereby, in his human nature, his unshaken confidence in the promise of God, and in the final success of his mission. Christ, not only, was obedient to the death, but to all things during life; and this conformity to the ordinances, and perfect reliance on the faithfulness of God, constituted part of his imputable righteousness as certainly as his resistance of the temptation of the devil. When about to eat of the passover, for the last time, he expressed the strong desire he had to partake of it then, which seems to have been more fervent and more feeling than on any former occasion. "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you, before I suffer." What was the cause of this strong and earnest desire? Was it not because he was just on the eve of accomplishing the great deliverance which it typified. "For I say unto you, I will not eat any more thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." He was now to enter, more directly, on the work of redemption and reconciliation. He saw before him the near prospect of his agony in the garden, and the deep sorrow which, even on the cross, and in the hour of death, was to overwhelm his soul. He knew that Judas had already covenanted with the chief priests to betray him, and that he was about to suffer many things, and drink of the cup of his Father's wrath against sin. But he travailed in the greatness of his strength, and as a solemn entrance on the mysterious work, he, with earnest desire, partook of the passover. It was the last which was ever to be celebrated as a prefiguration of the redemption. He was just about to fulfil it, and bring all types and sacrifices to an end. Could we, in the awful hour when he uttered the words expressive of

this strong and vehement desire, have known his inmost thoughts, should we not have beheld his holy soul full of resignation to the will of God—full of faith and confidence in the deliverance he was to achieve from the awful consequences of sin—full of hope in the glory which was to redound to the Father—and full of love to that guilty race he was to die to redeem. He manifested faith in the acceptance of his sufferings. He looked forward to the travail of his soul, and was satisfied. He beheld that innumerable company, which no man can number, whom he was to rescue from the power of the enemy, and conduct, as the Captain of their salvation, to glory and eternal felicity. It was no impatient wish to terminate his sufferings which led to this desire, but it was the assured knowledge, that in the body which had been prepared for him he was now to accomplish all that had been prefigured, and by the performance of this part of the covenant of grace was to save a world, otherwise lost and ruined. And if we may indulge conjecture, might not one strong ground of desire be, that now he was to institute a memorial and remembrance of his love, which was to continue till the end of time, as a comfort and consolation to his people. Did not the Redeemer behold all those who, in the course of ages then to come, were to believe on him, partaking of that holy ordinance he was to institute, and enjoying communion with him, and refreshment to their souls in the breaking of bread. It was to this hour that all the prophecies, and predictions, and promises referred. It was for the work of redemption that he came into the world. It was to perform the engagement he had come under for those saints and patriarchs who were already in the heavens, and to work out an everlasting deliverance for all who should hereafter believe on him, that he now made ready to drink that cup which was to be

put into his hand, and which was to fulfil, in the kingdom of God, that undertaking which the passover was intended to represent. And it was in this hour of trial and of bitterness that the Redeemer remembered his chosen with love and affection, and appointed for them a grateful ordinance and memorial, never to be forgotten. With confidence in the perfect atonement he was to make, he desired, as a testimony of that confidence, to eat this passover; and his followers now, ought to have the same earnest and fervent desire to partake of the ordinance he established, and to do so with feelings of confidence in his undertaking, and joy and gratitude for his unparalleled love. If our blessed Redeemer with desire desired to eat the passover before he suffered, can it be wrong in his humble and contrite follower, in the hour of deep tribulation, or in the near prospect of death, to enliven his soul, and strengthen his faith, by this holy ordinance, before passing into that state where faith and hope shall no longer be required, and where he shall have entered fully into the joy and love of his Lord.

Many excellent men are against the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the apartment of a sick person, lest it should be considered as a viaticum. But if we reason against the use of a thing from its abuse, there will be nothing left to commend. There certainly can be no ordinance more cordial and grateful to the soul in the awful prospect of death than this, and I apprehend the sole question is, whether cordials ought to be administered? Whether means are to be employed for increasing faith, and exalting love, hope, and joy? Nor will it be easy to give any reason why prayer and exhortation should be employed, which will not apply to the celebration, when it is piously desired, of the Lord's Supper. How refreshing to the departing soul to commemorate that

death to which alone he owes his hope of heaven, and to contemplate the love of that Saviour he is going to behold. Lord, thou art indeed mine, and I am thine. The sorrowing friends join in the holy communion with feelings which perhaps they never experienced before; nor can the hitherto thoughtless soon forget the solemnities in the dying chamber.

The last duty I shall mention is respect to ecclesiastical government. As there cannot be a doubt that civil government is necessary for the welfare of society, and that it is an ordination of God, so there can be as little doubt that a form of government is necessary to the welfare of the christian church, and is a mean, appointed by God, for its security and preservation. The very nature of the thing points out that there must be some polity, for without government there can be no order, and without order there can be no profitable communion amongst Christians. As this cannot be denied, and as it can as little be disputed that there was some form of government in existence in the days of the apostles, the inquiry comes to be, what that form was, and whether that form be unalterable, and essential to Christianity. On these points there have been many discussions, into which I do not mean to enter, but will be satisfied with observing, that the doctrines essential to salvation are most clearly, fully, and unequivocally detailed in scripture, so that all true disciples are agreed respecting that "one faith" which belongs to Christians. But we have no such imperative directions respecting the peculiar polity of the church which we certainly should have had if that had been a matter essential to salvation; and, therefore, from this circumstance, as well as from the nature of the thing itself, we conclude, that although a form be necessary to the welfare of the church, yet the particular form is not essential to

the salvation of the soul, or its preparation for heaven. There are in England and Scotland men of equal learning, equal judgment, equal candour, equal piety and integrity, who are led, from the same scripture, to form very different conclusions respecting the original constitution of the church; one conscientiously supporting episcopacy, another presbytery. This fact evinces that there must be some ambiguity in the matter, else, all pious and learned men should be of the same opinion; and this ambiguity, as well as considerations drawn from the intrinsic value of the subject, prove, I think, that the precise form of government, however important that may be, is still far subordinate to the doctrines essential to salvation. But all society must, to avoid confusion, have some form established, either by general consent, or by positive law; and the same causes will lead to the introduction into a country of a general confession of faith. An established religion in a nation, appears to be one of the means employed by Providence for the preservation of religion in that nation. The consequences of there being no system of religious doctrine and church polity established in a country, either by general consent or positive law, must be the division of the inhabitants into numerous sects, and the introduction of confusion, perhaps of discord. The effect of an establishment in England and Scotland is, that although in these countries, the church government be different, yet in each, the national church holds out a purity of doctrine, and an uniformity of worship, not otherwise to be preserved, and without which, it is probable, long ere now, the inhabitants would have been separated into as many sects and divisions, as there are whims and varieties in the mind of man. A national church, agrees in certain matters of government, but especially of doctrine,

which it is bound to maintain, and therefore affords a security, not otherwise to be obtained, that this doctrine shall remain, from age to age, as the belief of the majority. It only then remains to determine, whether the doctrine be good, in order to render the establishment good. It is only of a christian establishment that I am speaking, for an establishment of idolatry, is good for paganism, but not for Christianity. What, then, is good for idolatry ought, by the same reason, to be good for Christianity; and I no more defend an unchristian, than I do a pagan establishment. But if it be admitted, that an establishment be a good and natural mean, of keeping up a certain religion, true or false, in a country, it must follow that a christian establishment, must be favourable to Christianity. With regard to this country, it is needless to argue in point of doctrine, for, although in England and Scotland, the form of government and order of worship be different, yet, the doctrine is essentially the same in both the national churches. If a man be satisfied that the doctrine of the established church be that of the apostles, he ought to lend his support to the church, even although, in some minor points, of ceremonies and rules, he hold a different opinion. For it is not his duty to endanger doctrine, for the sake of polity, or to withdraw his support from that national society of Christians, which he believes to profess sound doctrine, and to be journeying towards heaven, merely, because he differs from them regarding a point, which he is convinced is neither to take him to heaven, nor keep him from it. He ought to consider, whether the advantage, he proposes to gain by separation, or by establishing a new sect, be greater than the evil to be produced. I think it cannot be denied, that the majority of those who dissent from the church, do so from questions of polity rather than

of doctrine ; and it also most certainly happens, that the greatest part of them are by no means qualified to decide on the matter. It is not a little melancholy to find, that although the difference of opinion, which prevails amongst men of the highest reputation for piety and learning, proves the question to be difficult, yet those who, in their capability of judging, or in the strength of their understanding, may be said not to know their right hand from their left, pronounce, boldly, on the questions which have divided the best, as well as the wisest, of our countrymen. Indeed, the matters on which the majority dissent from the established church, are intrinsically, or when compared to the grand question, “What shall I do to be saved?” of no more consequence, than the colour of the coat the preacher is to wear. If it be once admitted, which can scarcely be denied, that an establishment is useful, not to say a mean appointed by God, for advancing and preserving religion, and if it be admitted that questions of church polity, are not essential to salvation, I think it must appear to be the duty of every one, to support the establishment, unless he differ from it in his belief of important doctrines. Those who dissent, on account of doctrine, are the only justifiable dissenters ; but it becomes a man to weigh well his objections, before he endeavour to injure, what appears to be an appointment of God. It would indeed be not a little surprising, were it true, that a whole nation of Protestants, who have the word of God in their hands, and have it daily preached to them, should be, for so many years, in a state of heresy or mistake, and the truth be only discovered by men, who, neither in their conduct nor their principles, are better or purer than other people. That the truth hath not been discovered by them, exclusively, is pretty evident, from the variety of sects which proceed from them, and the numerous

refinements, which take place amongst them, until, in some instances, those who have begun by wavering, have ended in infidelity. I would wish every dissenter, to ask himself, what would be the consequence, if the spirit of separation, particularly for trifles, were to spread. Would it not introduce anarchy, disputings, and the destruction of religion? I would wish him, to put it to himself, whether the ground of his separation be, that he cannot as a Christian, with the hope of heaven, continue in communion with the church. If he be convinced, that the doctrines of the church are unchristian, then, he is justified in separating; nay, he is bound to separate. How far he is excusable, in adopting his peculiar opinions, and how far he is following truth and candour, in doing so, are different questions, which I am not to discuss. But, if, after a candid and unprejudiced examination, of the articles of faith, and after earnest prayer, he be convinced that the church is heterodox, he is justified in departing. The Socinians, for instance, are justified in leaving the church, for, neither they, nor Mahometans, from whom they differ much less than they choose to admit, can remain in communion with the church, as they worship a different God, and acknowledge a different prophet. They form, to themselves, an ideal divinity, just as certainly by diminishing, as they should do by adding to, the number of the persons in the Godhead, and are as truly idolaters, as the heathens who erected an altar to the unknown God. Such men must both leave and oppose the church. But those who believe in Jesus, as a divine person, and a sacrifice for sin, have no excuse for separation, nor, do I conceive that any follower of the meek and lowly Jesus, ought to desire to form a new sect, or become the head of a party. Others, doubtless, reason differently from me, and attach a greater im-

portance, to party distinctions, than I am able to do. Those who do so, from vanity, and a love of novelty, or from political opinions, and misconceptions of the ordination of God, respecting the connexion of church and state, an ordination which appears to have existed from the Patriarchs downwards, I pity; but those who cannot, with a good conscience, concede these points, I readily admit, must dissent, but I look forward to the period when they shall be convinced, that "one thing is needful," and that it was this "one thing" which brought them to heaven, and not their zeal regarding forms, ceremonies, or polity. There are many excellent and pious men, among the different classes of orthodox dissenters. We ought, therefore, to live in charity with one another, and join cordially in the communion of saints.

It is to be observed that the strictures I have offered, apply only to those who hold the same doctrines essentially with the church. They are, along with the Ephesians, exhorted to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called, in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." To those ancient or modern sects which deny the divinity of our Saviour, and the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, I do not address myself. With them the question rests on the truth of their tenets, which it would be foreign here to discuss.

I have now presented a short sketch of the principal duties incumbent on man, and of the requisitions made by the law of God. I have in this, endeavoured to observe that the leading principle must be supreme love to God. Love will produce a degree of conformity to his law, corresponding to its degree, and increasing as that approaches to supremacy. The

various affections of the mind, and acts of obedience, which constitute, in general language, piety and righteousness, may all be traced to the operation of the principle of love; for, where love is constant and supreme, it must perpetually, and exclusively, influence the mind. It must, of necessity, make man perform not one duty, nor at one time, but every duty, and at all times. It must make him, not devote one part, but every part, of his life to God. It must make him not cultivate one grace, but every grace, and every good disposition, not to a limited degree, but to the greatest conceivable extent. It must be productive of universal holiness, and most strict conformity to the image of Christ. There would be, in this case, no occasion for self-denial, for supreme love would render it painful to neglect any duty, and make it as our meat and our drink to do the will of our heavenly Father. But, alas! where is this love to be found? how weak its degree in the best of men? and how greatly does its deficiency call for humility and self-denial? If any man examine himself, even by the very imperfect sketch which I have given of the duties required of him, he must perceive how little he has to boast of; and when he comes to stand in the presence of God, when the divine law shall appear in all its force and extent, he will behold how little he hath been conformed to that law, and how feebly his mind, and heart, and actions have been actuated by the principles of love and obedience. I may, without hesitation, inquire now, if any man does suppose that he possesses that supreme love, and can yield that perpetual, universal, perfect obedience, which shall entitle him to rest his hope of salvation on his own righteousness. I may go farther, and inquire if any man can suppose, that his own righteousness, such as it is, can even contribute in the least degree, to form a ground of acceptance with

God. Before he answer this question, I would have him consider the supreme love which is required, the extent, spirituality, and strictness of the divine law, on the one hand, and on the other, the languor of his love, the preference he gives to other objects over God, his want of conformity to the moral perfections of God, and the imperfection of his obedience, compared even to that weak degree, which frail and sinful men might yield, and which they feel conscious that they do not yield. The law is perfect, as the God from whom it proceeds, and can no more be modified in its nature, or abridged in its requisitions, than the nature of the Holy Being can be changed, by whom it was revealed. One single transgression taints the soul, and this corruption of quality and principle, must destroy all claim, and every hope of acceptance. For either the law, which requires perfect obedience, and spotless purity, must be softened, that is, its purity must be destroyed, or the God, whose nature is holiness, must be no longer holy, by sanctioning that which is not perfect; and the very same destruction of the perfection of God, and of his known attributes, must result from any scheme of mercy which is not consistent, and connected with, the strictest justice, and with a restoration to holiness, of all those who are accepted by God. Whoever reflects on the requisitions of the law of God, and the obligation on man to love him with all his heart, soul, and strength, and to devote every part of his life, every operation of the mind to his service and glory, must with a sigh exclaim, who is sufficient for these things? In this state of mind, produced by a full apprehension of the moral law, and a deep conviction that we cannot comply with it, on account of the sinfulness of our nature, the doctrine of the grace of God, comes with seasonable consolation, and the offer to us of sanctification and of forgiveness, in

consequence of the righteousness and atonement of Jesus, imputed to us through faith, is received with eagerness, gladness, and grateful joy. We see that by our own works, we cannot be saved, and therefore thankfully accept of the salvation offered by Christ. We rest our hopes, entirely, and unreservedly, on the mercy of God, who grants us remission of sins through faith in Jesus. We receive him most gladly as our Saviour, and rely on his infinite merit. Nor let it ever be urged, after reading the moral precepts of the gospel, and the duties it requires, that the doctrine of salvation, by grace through faith, is favourable to indolence, far less to licentiousness. No faith is cordial and sincere, which does not produce love to the Giver of salvation, and an effect of love always must be, a desire to please him whom we love. Faith is an operation of the Spirit, and where the Spirit of God is, there must be sanctification, and personal holiness. Let us then pray that we may have faith in Jesus, and may love God, and keep his commandments.

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE ADMONITIONS AND CONSOLATIONS AFFORDED
BY CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY.

AFTER having considered the doctrines of the christian religion, and the duties it inculcates, I am naturally led to point out some of those instructions and consolations which it affords.

I.

To those who enjoy temporal prosperity, or who are in the keen pursuit of it, christian philosophy offers some very important instructions. One of the first, and not the least valuable, is, to form a just estimate of what is really good. All our expectation of temporal good arises either from the gratification of the bodily senses, or the indulgence of the desires and passions of the mind. The first comprehends the relief of those uneasy sensations which are produced, when the body is deficient in any circumstance necessary to its welfare, such as the sensations of hunger, thirst, cold, &c. But besides the gratification derived from the relief of these sensations, there may be a higher degree afforded by the superior quality of the means employed for this purpose; and hence, for example, comes the desire of luxurious living. But the greatest part of the expected pleasure or apprehended evil proceeds from the second source, from the desire of power, of fame, &c., and from the

passions, not merely of the benevolent kind, which we should expect alone to produce happiness, but also, and, indeed, too frequently, from the false expectation of good from those of the malevolent class. With regard to the first source of our expectation of good, it is evident that, in so far as the body is concerned, and, generally speaking, even in so far as it is to be considered as connected with mind, that only is essentially good which is essentially necessary. He who has what is necessary for the supply of the wants of the body, has what is good. He who has more varied means, has what may be good or bad according to circumstances, particularly according to the effect on the mind. With regard to the second source, it is no less evident that nothing can be good for the mind which does not proceed from benevolent affections, and tend to its advancement in moral excellence. That which is good for man, as an animal, is fixed and limited by the necessary wants of the body; but that which is to be considered as good for man as a rational creature is only limited by the degree to which his moral advancement can be carried. But unfortunately the opinion of mankind respecting what is good and desirable is seldom founded on this principle. They rather appear to consider that it consists in artificially heightening the desires of the body, in procuring the means of gratifying these with the greatest pleasure, and in promoting and indulging those desires and passions of the mind which relate only to a temporal state. By prosperity, then, is generally understood a state of health, the means of gratifying what may be called the temporal desires of the mind, a liberal provision for bodily wants, and either the comfort arising from social affections, or at least the absence of that pain which proceeds from violence done to these affections. Now, what does Christianity teach to those who are in the

actual possession or the eager pursuit of this state? It teaches them that there is a difference between prosperity and happiness—between a prosperous and an advantageous state; and that no state can be truly happy or desirable which is devoted to the acquisition of sinful pleasures, and spent in the neglect of God. It teaches them, not only to discover what is really good in prosperity, but also to moderate their desires, and prevent them from being carried beyond the due point. It teaches more than this,—it teaches that all temporal good is to be considered as subservient to eternal good, as the mean of supporting us in this our pilgrimage, and of promoting our love to God. He who looks on temporal prosperity in this light will use it well. He who gives that affection to a thing which is transient, that belongs only to that which is eternal, must be disappointed. That bodily comfort is desirable, and the opposite state to be avoided, are facts, which it would be a perversion of reason to deny; and every man may, properly and justly, desire health and sufficient food and raiment; but, having these things, he ought to be satisfied. It does not, however, follow, that if he have not these things, he ought to be discontented, for God hath appointed his temporal state wisely. But the greatest part of our anxiety proceeds from a longing after those things which are not essential, or even advantageous for the body. The costliness of apparel, the elegance of a house, the luxury of the table, and all those things which minister to pride and vanity, derive the greatest part of their importance from the imagination, and the weak passions which they gratify; for the body itself is as comfortable in plain raiment, as in purple and fine linen. A good and a wise man may seek health and the necessities of life, but all beyond this he ought to consider as superfluous, and if he possess

it, is to view it in such a way as to be ready to do without it. It would be foolish to set his heart on things which are transient in their nature, and uncertain in their continuance. He cannot obtain these acquisitions by his most strenuous desire, nor retain them with certainty when he acquires them. How often do riches take wings to themselves and flee away, beauty perisheth as a flower of the field, and honour is exceedingly deceitful. To rivet the affections on these things, is only to minister to disappointment; and to extend our desires is only to increase our anxiety. Temporal good and evil are very much estimated by comparison; for that which would be grasped with avidity by one man, as exceeding his most sanguine hopes, and carrying him beyond his ideal point of happiness, is viewed by another as a calamity hardly to be endured. This single fact surely ought to teach men, not to say Christians, not to be high-minded, or to fix their ideas of happiness on a precise degree, or on any degree whatever, of those things which are neither positively attainable, nor when obtained, secure in their continuance. But, besides, it is found that these things do not afford that pleasure in their possession, which we anticipated in their pursuit; but the fault is not supposed to lie in the quality of the things, but in the degree, and where prosperity fails to bring happiness, as it always will do, when happiness is sought from it alone, we press on in pursuit of some greater degree of riches, or honour, or some other fleeting trifle.

But we are not only to moderate our desires in prosperity, but also to consider it as given for the purpose of increasing our love to God, and enabling us to do good to our neighbour. We are to consider how we may use it to the advancement of our christian course. It cannot be given to attach us

to this life, or draw our views from eternity. It cannot be given to promote the spirit of this world, to drown the thoughts in the cares and pleasures of this life, and withdraw them from the wondrous love of God and the expectation of heaven. But it is given to lead us in gratitude to the Giver of all good, to promote our love to him, to enable us to assist others in their progress through this state of probation.

There is another class of comforts more independent of the body—those resulting from friendship and social affection. These may exist under every variety of external circumstances, and constitute our purest and highest temporal pleasure. But even this pure delight is not stable, for the object may change, or may be taken from us. A wise man, whilst he enjoys social affection as the source of his greatest earthly happiness, will still recollect that it is earthly, and will be careful not to divide his affection with God and the object, but will at all times love it with a reference to the will and pleasure and glory of God.

It is not to be imagined, from this view of temporal happiness, that we are to be indifferent to enjoyment, for that were indeed despising the gifts of God, as well as countenancing the calumny that religion is gloomy, and that Christian and Ascetic are synonymous terms. My intention is merely to show that men ought so to moderate their desires, as not to love inordinately temporal and transient things, but to use them for their good, and be ready to part with them for their good.

But, besides moderating our desires, and viewing prosperity as intended to promote our future interest, there are some more special admonitions to be attended to.

Receive the bounty of God with deep humility, for sin hath made you unworthy of the least of his

mercies. It is only through Christ that men obtain the necessities of this life, and the offer of that which is to come.

Use the good which is given with gratitude, and to the greatest possible advantage, lest it be taken away; and during its possession employ it in such a way, as, upon a retrospect, you would wish you had done when you come to lose it. Above all, use it as you would wish you had done, when you come to die.

Do not use the means you have in procuring vicious pleasures, or in ministering unto sin, for that is perverting the gift of God, and turning his blessing into a curse. But employ your riches, your health, your power, in the service of God, knowing that you must give an account, as a steward, of what is committed to you. Especially, reflect that you are commanded to lay by you in store, as God hath prospered you, that you may relieve those who are poor and needy. If prosperity be employed in the service of sin, then, if you be a Christian, though weak in faith, the means you have perverted will be taken away, if no other mode lead to reformation; for sin must be subdued within you, though the means of doing so be known only to God. It may be by some different method, but it often happens that repentance is produced by taking away the means of sinning, especially when this is at the same time a punishment.

Remember that worldly prosperity calls for great watchfulness, as ease and pleasure are apt to lull the soul, and make you too fond of this life. If this should happen, and prosperity fail to improve the soul, affliction will be sent to produce the desired end.

Consider this world as passing away, and that it is as certain we shall take none of its riches or good things with us, as it is that we brought none of them

here. Let us, then, listen to the injunction laid on Timothy, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy ; that they do good—that they be rich in good works—ready to distribute—willing to communicate."

Finally, as God appointeth every thing by his Providence, view the prosperous state in which you are placed, as entirely the doing of the Lord. Receive it as a gift through Christ, demanding fervent gratitude and thanksgiving. Praise him with a thankful heart, and examine how you can best employ that state in his service, and to your own spiritual benefit. Pray earnestly that you may be enabled to improve by all things, and to employ prosperity to a good purpose, and remember that it is necessary, to use the means of obtaining the desire of your prayer. If yet a stranger to the love of God in Christ, consider his goodness in this life as a call to give him your soul as a persuasion to repentance. It is foolish and ungrateful to reject the call of mercy, or to neglect it for that which is temporal. What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his soul? If, however, you be received into the number of the children of God, there is a still stronger call not to abuse his temporal goodness, to the neglect of the fruits of the Spirit. As all things shall work for your good, this also shall do so, and the part which belongs to you is, to consider how you shall best turn prosperity to the improvement of your faith, and love, and obedience. If you be Christ's, all that you have is also his ; if you are to devote to him your heart and soul, you are also to devote to him your whole life, and every acquisition. Every thing is to be employed in his service, and to promote his glory. Whatsoever you

do, is to be done in the name of Christ. If this be a state of trial and preparation for a better world, then, prosperity, and adversity, every circumstance in this life is to be improved, to the furtherance of the great object set before us. In a short time, every thing which is in this earth, nay, the earth itself, shall pass away, its attractions, and its vanities, its joys, and its comforts, shall vanish as shadows. The things themselves shall depart, but their effects on the soul shall remain, which must answer for its improvement of every state, to the increase of the life of faith.

II.

As there is a state of temporal prosperity, so is there also, a state of spiritual comfort and tranquillity, peace of conscience, and hope of future happiness. All Christians have not the same joy in believing, and some are long in heaviness, through manifold temptations. That a state of peace and hope is desirable, is too evident to require proof; but as all is not desirable, in a state of temporal prosperity, nor truly good, so, in this state, there may be much danger, and, at all times, it calls for watchfulness. It becomes those who possess this peace of conscience, to examine, whether it proceed from faith and its fruits, or, from less sensibility, in their views of sin. Sin is so exceedingly deceitful, that those who escape gross transgressions too often, notwithstanding their knowledge of the doctrine of imputed righteousness, do draw, practically, some consolation from their own merit; and, however many their instances of failure may be, however frequent their indulgence in unchristian passions and an unchristian spirit, yet, if they avoid those sins, to which they attach a greater importance, because, perhaps, they are novel, or seldom repeated, they conceive that all is well. This

is not a state of true spiritual prosperity, though it often passeth for such. It is, on the contrary, an introduction to a state of spiritual pride, and of dangerous security. As long as it continues, improvement is at an end, and it is well, indeed, if the steps be not retrograde. This state, then, so unjustly counted prosperous, requires much watchfulness, and serious meditation on the evil of sin, and the great price paid to redeem men from it. It is a state, into which every Christian is apt to be drawn, and from which he can only be preserved by the Spirit of God, obtained by prayer. He is drawn into it by his own heart, and the wiles of Satan, who hopes, thus, to obtain him for a prey. Advantage is taken of his best principles, of the foundation of his hope, to ensnare him. He is led to trust too much to speculative faith, and neglect practice; to look to Jesus, but at the same time, to be more insensible of the evil nature of sin; to trust to Jesus for deliverance from its punishment, more than from its power. He, for I speak only of Christians, though weak in faith, and under the wiles of the enemy, feels that he loves Jesus, and trusts to him for salvation; but, alas! he also loves sin, and does not view it, as in every instance, and in every degree, to be that hateful thing, in the sight of God, which it really is. He may not be sensible of his attachment to sin, nor conscious how much it prevails within him; but that is his misfortune, and the cause of his imperfection. He is not humble as he ought to be, under a sense of sin. He is not loving and grateful, as he ought to be, in the consideration of the amazing love of God. He is not sufficiently sensible of the dreadful nature of sin, of the corruption of his heart, and of the necessity of the atonement and righteousness of Jesus, and of the Holy Spirit he is to give. Words, indeed, cannot describe this necessity. The heart of man

cannot conceive these things in their true importance. The highest conception which man can form, in his mortal state, is probably in the near prospect of death, when about to quit this world and appear before God. Then sin appears dreadful, then the value of a Saviour appears inexpressibly great, then love to God for this Saviour burns with a lively flame, and the soul considers every thing as of no avail or consequence, which does not promote the glory of God. A state of real spiritual prosperity consists not, then, in a state of peace, proceeding from diminished sensibility, but in an approach to that state, which, it is hoped, every good man enjoys before death. It consists in a deep sense of the evil of sin, and of the sinfulness of the soul—a most humble view of our own nature, and our own power—a firm reliance on Jesus, for salvation from the punishment, we are conscious of deserving—a fervent desire for the promised influence of the Spirit, to deliver us from the power of sin—and a cordial dependence on this influence alone, for sanctification. It consists in love to God, springing from faith in Jesus, and strict obedience springing from love. True prosperity, then, never loses sight of sin, never is blind to the corruption and wickedness of the heart, but it, also, never loses sight of Jesus, and his exceeding great and precious promises. It is the lively exercise of faith alone, which can give peace of mind. It is the witness of the Spirit of God, with our Spirit, which alone can give hope and assurance. A sense of sin, and a sight of a Saviour, are to be connected together. But it is not given to all, to go on their way rejoicing. Let those who do rejoice, and who have joy in believing, watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation, and guard diligently against spiritual pride. Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall; for there is much reason to fear, that those who feel

secure, and a tendency to pride, shall be left to fall into some particular sin, which will open their eyes to their real state of guilt and weakness, and lead them to more humility. Even Christians may have false joy and false peace, for sin and infirmity are not altogether subdued in any man here. Whatever circumstances may operate, to the production of these deceptions, the principles on which they are founded, and, consequently, against which we ought to guard, are a weakened impression of the opposition of sin, to the holy law of God, and of his hatred to it, and ignorance, respecting the corruption of our own heart. True christian peace and joy, are founded on a clear view of the sinfulness of sin—a consciousness of our own inexpressible guilt—and a steady faith in Jesus. By examining the foundation of our peace, we may know, whether it be peace, proceeding from reconciliation, or from insensibility. Those happy men, who “rejoice, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory,” do so, alone, by believing in Jesus, and loving him whom they have not yet seen. They never lose sight of their own sin; but they never lose sight of his righteousness. He, to whom much is forgiven, loveth much, and, therefore, keen and humble views of his guilt, which, taken alone, would plunge him in despair, do, when connected with views of the salvation, procured by Jesus, produce lively gratitude and joy. The admonition, then, to those who enjoy peace of mind, is to inquire into the foundation, on which that is placed. Redemption, though a perfect, is a complex work, adapted to the actual state of sinners, and there can be no safe peace, which does not rest on the whole of Christ’s work, and not on any one part of it. It is a fatal delusion in any man to trust alone to the atonement, or imputable righteousness of Christ, either separately or conjoined. He must, also, as an indispensable part of the finished and

blessed work, receive that Holy Spirit, who changes and sanctifies the heart, and the presence of this Spirit enables him to depend on the whole mediatorial work of Jesus—comforts him in this dependence, and prepares him more and more for the joys of heaven. If peace proceed from indifference to sin, and from hope, placed on any other source, than the redemption of Christ, from the love, power, and punishment of sin, it is deceitful, and the sooner it is destroyed the better. If it proceed from the peace-speaking blood of Jesus, let it be preserved and increased, by a recurrence to those views of his work of mercy and of power, which produce it; by increasing discoveries of the evil of sin, and our proneness to it; by increasing earnestness, in seeking shelter under the rock, Christ Jesus; by constant prayer; by careful watching; by the exercise of faith and love; and the cultivation of all the fruits of the Spirit. This conduct leads not to fatal security, to indifference to sin, for sin is deeply deplored; it leads to increasing reliance on the promised aid of God, and to the use of that shield of faith, whereby we may destroy all the darts of the enemy. It does not make us careless as to those darts, but vigilant to ward them off; and we fight not alone, for he who is for us, is more than all who are against us. As peace and joy here, through Jesus, are preludes to the happiness of heaven, they are to be procured and encouraged only by cultivating heavenly dispositions; and he who wishes to continue in a state of spiritual prosperity, must have his conversation in heaven, and pray daily for an increase of faith—of that faith which bringeth forth much fruit.

III.

The christian religion affords strong consolation to every sufferer, whatever may be the cause of his

affliction. Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upwards; but of all the misery to which he is subject, none is more terrible than that which proceeds from an awakened conscience, and a conviction of unpardoned sin. Under an acute sense of sin, and of the wrath of God against it, the sinner trembles in the prospect of destruction. He sees his own guilt and depravity so clearly, the purity and holiness of the law of God, so distinctly, and the universal want of conformity to this in his heart, indeed his enmity to God, so strongly, that he cannot persuade himself, that such a guilty creature may hope for pardon or salvation. To live without fear, is now impossible—to die, is still more dreadful. The present is full of awful forebodings—the future, is beheld with dismay—and death is anticipated, as the beginning of sorrows. No longer is sin considered as harmless, no longer is the curse of the law heard with indifference, but, in the terror and bitterness of his soul, the sinner cries out, What shall I do to be saved? In this dreadful state, he finds no help in himself; his past conduct can afford neither hope nor comfort; his present state can offer no plea for pardon, nor can he derive any consolation from prospects of futurity. His iniquities have gone over his head,—his sin is a weight too heavy for him to bear. In this sad estate, in this desponding condition, in which the soul bath rest neither by day nor by night, the sinner is directed to Jesus the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. He hears the kind and merciful invitation of the gospel; he is convinced that there is no hope in himself, but that Jesus is able to deliver him. But a sense of his guilt makes him think himself too unworthy to come to Jesus,—too bad to hope for mercy. He feels that he hath nothing to offer—that he hath nothing to plead—that he hath no right to ask for this great salvation. It is this very feeling

which ought to give him hope—it is a sign of his approaching recovery. If he thought he had any claim on his own account, any help in himself, any thing of his own to offer, as a ground of acceptance with God, he would not come cordially to Jesus. But he is deeply humbled, and comes, crying, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.”—“Help, Lord, else I perish.” In such circumstances, the consolations of the gospel are most powerful. The words of Jesus are words of hope. They are words of kindness and encouragement. “Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Come unto me, I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. Come then unto me, and I will give you rest. I can do it, and I will do it. Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no ways cast out. Jesus came not to save the righteous—not to save those who are righteous in their own estimation; but he came to seek and to save that which is lost—he came to save sinners—those, who have no righteousness of their own. If you be a sinner, that is enough. If you be sensible of your sin, and your need of a Saviour—if you believe that Jesus is able to save you—that, O sinner, is a sufficient ground to come unto him. He hath fulfilled every thing, required by God, for you. He withstood the temptation of the devil, who seduced Adam. He obeyed perfectly the law, which Adam broke, and which you have so often broken. He bore the punishment which you deserved. The consequence of this is, by mutual engagement between the Father and Son, that his sufferings are imputed to you, as an atonement for sin, his righteousness is imputed to you, and his Spirit is bestowed upon you, to make you holy. He died to make you a part of himself—a partaker, in one respect, of the divine nature. You are lost, indeed, in yourself, but God

hath, for the sake of Jesus, promised to give his Holy Spirit unto you, that by uniting with your spirit, and dwelling in you, you may be made holy. As Adam was originally holy, in his own nature, by creation, you are to be made holy, by the infusion of the divine Spirit of holiness; and, therefore, are more highly exalted, being thus made a partaker of the divine nature. This gift of the Spirit, this work of sanctification, is promised as a purchase made by Christ; and, for his sake, also, God considers that you are altogether righteous, and have been punished already for all your transgressions, both the obedience and the sufferings of Jesus being imputed to you, inasmuch, as it was in your stead, and in your nature, that he obeyed and suffered. All that is required of you, is faith in him, faith to believe all this. You feel that you are dead in sin. It is true, and the scripture confirms your feeling; but you, who are dead in trespasses and sins, hath he quickened—to you is the Spirit of God given—and this Spirit worketh faith in you and produceth all its fruits. Pray, then, earnestly to God, to enlighten your understanding, to direct your heart into the belief of the truth, as it is in Jesus, and to bestow upon you, the promise of the Spirit through him. There never yet hath been an instance of this prayer being rejected. Pray earnestly then—pray often—you shall be heard, and shall, at length, feel the power of Jesus to save you from your sins—from the love—from the dominion—and from the punishment of sin. There is no instance recorded in scripture, of any supplicant whatever, having his petition refused, except those who knew not what they asked, and who expected a temporal kingdom for the Messiah. Even the thief on the cross was received with mercy and alacrity. There were no expostulations on the number of his sins, or on the lateness of his repentance. The

answer was immediate and decisive. "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Is our Lord less able, or less willing, to save now, than he was then? or was the thief more likely to succeed, because he saw Jesus in the body, than we are, who believe that he ever liveth to make intercession for his people? Did not Jesus pray for his murderers? Did he not receive every one of them, afterwards, who came unto him? Did he not, even miraculously, call Saul, who went about persecuting him? Did he not bear with his disciples, in all their sins and follies, and send a message, after his resurrection, to Peter, who denied him? Did he not, while on earth, encourage all to come unto him, without exception, without any regard to their past lives, publicans and sinners, one out of whom were cast seven devils, one to whom much was forgiven? all were received, and their reception recorded for our encouragement and comfort.

There are two encouragements to sinners. The one, that Jesus is able, the other, that he is willing, to save them. Now, the first of these is evident, from the express declaration of Jesus and his apostles, and from the general reasoning drawn from the nature of his sufferings. What saith the scripture on this point? "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The gospels and epistles all testify, that Jesus gave himself as a sacrifice for sin; "wherefore he is able to save, unto the uttermost, all who come unto him." "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." "I am the door; by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved." "I am the bread of life; whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life." In the fourth and fifth chapters of the epistle to the Romans, Paul argues,

that no man can be justified by his own works, but only through faith in Christ. He draws a comparison between the fall of Adam, and the renewal of his spiritual posterity; and reasons justly, that if Christ died for men while they were enemies, much more will he save them, when they are reconciled. Peter, in his sermon, published the glad tidings of salvation. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him, all that believe are justified from all things." If we admit that Jesus lived and died, we must admit that he did so for the salvation of men; and if we believe that he was given by the Father, as a sacrifice for sin, and undertook to deliver men from sin, we must believe also, that he is sufficient for the proposed end. His ability is as certain as the power and wisdom of God. His power to save is as great, and as complete, as his power to create, or preserve. There is no sin so heinous, that he cannot atone for it; there is no one so guilty, that he cannot redeem him; there is no man so depraved, so dead in trespasses and sins, that his Spirit cannot quicken and sanctify him. Judas himself perished, not because Jesus could not save him, but because he remained impenitent, and sought not remission of sins. The power of Christ to save sinners is, indeed, so fully displayed in the gospel, and is so evident from the facts we know, that few, if any, deny his ability. It is more difficult, however, for a sinner to persuade himself of the inclination, than of the ability, of Christ to save him. But the one is as evident as the other, if we seek for knowledge where alone it is to be found. If Jesus died for sinners, then, surely, he will bestow upon them the blessing which he died to procure. If it once be admitted, that the object of the sufferings of Christ was to

redeem men, it must also irresistibly follow, that he who submitted to pay this great price, must be willing to confer what was purchased, otherwise, it had been purchased in vain. If his sufferings were of finite value, and could only redeem a limited number, or from a certain degree of guilt, then we might indeed be discouraged. But his merit is infinite, and his power to save is infinite. There is no more difficulty in saving from many, than from few sins. The blood which can wash away the original corruption of our nature, can wipe away also every stain which that produceth. The full price is already paid. The purchase is already made. The blessing is freely offered. The invitation of Jesus is this, Ho ! every one that thirsteth, every one without exception, come and drink of living water. “ I am the door, by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” All that is required is, that he enter in. The door is open, and no qualification is demanded, except that the person desires safety. “ Ask,” says Jesus, “ and it shall be given unto you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” Nay, this is not all, for Christ even offers himself, and does not wait till he be sought. “ Behold, I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear my voice, I will come in unto him.” How condescending—how compassionate, in our gracious Redeemer ! He stands knocking—he stands for years, imploring the sinner to hear his voice, and let him in. He offers himself to every one. He calls unto every one, not indeed individually by name, but he calls to all who are men and sinners, without one exception. It is enough that the sinner be of the race of Adam. The call is as certainly to him, as if he had been mentioned by name, as Paul was, on the road to Damascus. These words are addressed to him :—
 “ Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy

laden, and I will give you rest. If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." It is enough that you are weary and thirsty; come unto me and I will give you rest, and will quench your thirst. It is the very circumstance of your guilt—the very thing which makes you afraid, that is the cause why God offers his Son. The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. Rejoice with me, says he, for I have found my sheep which was lost; and there is, accordingly, joy in heaven, over one sinner that repenteth. We can have no conception of the willingness of Christ to save sinners. Until we can form a conception of the greatness of his sufferings, we can form no conception of the greatness of his love. This love is displayed, not in loving those who first loved him, but in loving those who have not yet even known him as their Redeemer. The love of God and of Christ is infinite, like all the other divine perfections: and he who has a just notion of the attributes of God, and admits the power of Christ to save even the chief of sinners, must equally admit his inclination. The whole of the New Testament is filled with encouragement to consider Jesus, both as infinitely powerful, and infinitely willing, to save sinners. All that is required is, that they come unto him, and believe that he is able and willing to save them. All that is asked is, "Believe ye that I am able, and willing, to do this? according to thy faith, be it unto thee."

But still, although the sinner must admit, abstractly, the power and inclination of Christ to save guilty men, yet he cannot persuade himself that he shall be saved. Many circumstances contribute to this kind of unbelief,—a doubt of the sincerity of his repentance—a deep sense of the greatness of his guilt—a deceitful desire to have something good to offer, and yet a consciousness that there is no sound-

ness within—ignorance and misconception of the grace of God. All these tend to prevent the awakened sinner from resting with hope and steadfastness on Christ, and are employed by Satan to retain him in his service. It is only by the Spirit of God that at length the sinner feels that Jesus is able and willing to save him as an individual. He admits from the first the truth of the doctrine of the gospel; but how does he know that he is benefited by it and united to Christ? This he does in two ways. There can be no union to Christ without the Holy Spirit, and he cannot have received the Holy Spirit without being sanctified. The Spirit makes him holy, and purifies his heart and desires; therefore, by the existence of the fruit of the Spirit, he judges of his presence. One way, therefore, by which he knows that he is made a partaker of Christ, is by his thoughts and desires being changed, and by faith and love ruling in his heart. The other is, by the Spirit of God witnessing with his spirit that he has become a son of God. That is, an internal persuasion and belief that Jesus will save him, which he knows to be no delusion or vain imagination when it is accompanied with the fruits of the Spirit. This is well styled “an assurance of faith,” that is, a personal reliance on Christ for salvation; and the Spirit in this way is said to be “the earnest of our inheritance,” by whom we know, not only the general power of Christ to save, but “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe,” and by whom we know and feel that God hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and “good hope through grace.” It is to this personal application that Paul alludes when he says, to the Thessalonians, “Our gospel came not unto you, in word only, but also in power, and the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.” “Hereby,” says another

apostle, "know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." Now, the speculative knowledge of the power of Christ may be obtained by reading the scriptures; but the personal persuasion of this power being exerted in our behalf never can be obtained by any degree of study, or by any reasoning whatever, and may exist in different degrees, from a feeble hope to firm confidence. It is a gift of God, and therefore must be sought from him by earnest prayer. The sinner never can be saved but by being united to Christ; but he can no more unite himself to Christ than he can transport himself to heaven. This union is accomplished by the Spirit, and being accomplished, must be known. It is our duty to pray for this essential operation of the Spirit, to pray for pardon and reconciliation through the sacrifice of Jesus, and for the promised influence of the Spirit. The Spirit is promised by him who is truth itself, and who said, Ask, and ye shall obtain. Let the awakened and trembling sinner, then, flee to the cross of Christ and cry, "Lord, I desire to believe; help thou my unbelief." Let him plead the merit of the obedience and sufferings of Christ, night and day, until he obtain the promised Spirit by which he is at last enabled to rest, not with hesitation, not with probability, but with confidence and steady hope, and joy unspeakable and full of glory, on the all-sufficient work of Christ. Then he is enabled to "know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." Prayer is the mean by which all spiritual blessings are obtained. He who hopes to obtain these without asking them, hopes for that which he has no right to expect. He who, in the name and for the sake of Jesus, prays earnestly and frequently for the benefits purchased by Christ, shall not be disappointed, for

he has the promise of God himself, that he shall be heard.

As a man must be conscious of the operations of his own mind, and the state of his affections, it has been supposed that every Christian must have a positive assurance within himself, that he is so. This supposition proceeds from the error of making no distinction between absolute confidence, or certainty, and hope, and has led to an extension of the scripture doctrine, to an unwarrantable degree. Were absolute assurance essentially necessary to constitute a Christian, what should we say of those who are in heaviness through manifold temptations, or of him who exclaimed, Is the mercy of God clean gone for ever? Utter hopelessness is, indeed, never the lot of a Christian, unless when suffering under that severe visitation of Providence, morbid melancholy, or a disordered state of mind, to which, like other men, he is liable. But in the soundest state there may be much depression, and many fears. The most humble and diffident are not to be discouraged, though they feel no strong and commanding assurance. They must not forget that there is a difference between hope and confidence, and that there may be hope without absolute and unqualified assurance. Let not, then, those humble men, who dare not say they have acquired boldness and certainty respecting their security despond, for even in their darkest hour they are not without hope, and would not relinquish it, such as it is, for all that the world can offer. Personal hope will indeed be strong, in proportion to our discernment of the character and perfections of God, our dependence on the Saviour he has appointed, and our conformity to him who is our reconciliation. If we talk of assurance, as the result of reasoning, we must admit, that when the proofs of the existence of the character of the assured are

wanting, there can be no foundation for hope. If, on the other hand, we consider this assurance as a gracious gift of the Spirit, we must say, that it will not be bestowed where the fruits of that Spirit are not to be found. That assurance, which is not accompanied by deep humility, by holy affections, and a devout life, cannot be too much mistrusted. Ardent faith, if genuine, must always be accompanied by cordial love, and active obedience. One, weak in faith, may say, I neither bear the fruit of the Spirit, nor have his witness within me, that I belong to Christ. Of many such, it may be well to ask, why he goes mourning all the day long? Is it not, too often, because he is attempting to reconcile the service of the world with the worship of God? and are not these doubts and fears raised within him, as calls from a Father, who has not forsaken nor rejected him, to bethink himself of his demand on his heart, and the fulness of his offer of the Spirit of grace and sanctification. Let him pray for reconciliation and peace, and for strength to come out from the world, and then he shall have the desire of his heart.

IV.

The spiritual consolation of the gospel is not confined to those who are newly converted, and have just laid hold on the hope set before them. Christians have all much sin to repent of, and many of them have to deplore grievous backsliding, and have bitter sorrow on account of their transgressions. Blessed be God, in these seasons of deep distress, they are not left to despair, nor abandoned by the Spirit of God. That Christians may fall into grievous sins, is evident from the contrite confessions and earnest supplications made by David and the Pro-

phets, from the history of Peter, from the transgressor at Corinth, who was to be comforted lest he should be "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow," from the parable of the prodigal son, and from the reference made by the apostle to godly sorrow. Paul himself, whose faith we cannot doubt, confessed that the evil which he would not, that he did, and in the strong view he had of this inward corruption, cried out, "Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" He does not, in his epistles, make confession of particular sins, though, doubtless, he did so to God; but that he was conscious of the prevalence of iniquity, and his liability to fall, is evident from the careful watching he found necessary. "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection," says he, "lest, that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." This fear could never have entered into his heart, if he had not been sensible of the powerful temptations of Satan, if he had not felt his own weakness, and known the troubles of his own heart. He sought relief and aid where alone they can be found. Having alluded to his own case, he goes on exhorting the Corinthians to take warning by the Israelites, that they should not lust after evil things, many of which he particularises, and draws this conclusion: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall;" and he encourages them with an assurance, that no temptation shall befall them, above what they are able to bear, if they seek the proper "way to escape."

But if, unfortunately, the Christian hath not sought the way to escape, and hath, actually, yielded to temptation, the consequence must be anguish of mind and great sorrow. He is deeply distressed that he hath offended God—he bitterly laments this sad proof, that sin prevails within him—he is cut to the heart,

with a sense of his ingratitude and guilt, and trembles lest the Spirit of God may depart and leave him to himself. He fears that his former professions have been delusive, and that now he is to return to the love of sin and disregard of God. Amidst all his personal distress, he likewise regrets that his conduct may bring reproach on the religion he professeth, and may give occasion to others to doubt the value of a religious principle. His soul is humbled within him, and he cries out from the heart, "I am no longer worthy to be called thy son." This deep sense of his guilt, and his keen self-reproach, make him truly wretched. He beholds an offended God, and perhaps doubts his interest in that Saviour, who alone can protect him. But even in this situation, even under the aggravated guilt of offending God, with whom he had made a solemn covenant, and from whom he had received the hope of glory, even in this situation the gospel holds out consolation and comfort. The blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin. His Spirit can sanctify every heart. It is indeed melancholy, that any disciple should have forgotten his Lord; but it would be still more dreadful that he should not lament his sin when it was committed. It would be a fatal symptom, if a professing Christian were to sin, and feel neither grief nor contrition. It is good to be afflicted, for where there is sorrow, there is hope of reformation. Indeed, where there is not a daily sense of sin—a constant humility—it is to be feared that the absence of these sentiments proceeds not from the want of sin, but the want of feeling. John observes, that if any man suppose he hath no sin, he deceives himself, and has no love to God. Perhaps, in this dangerous state of supposed security, one mean of awakening the sleeping disciple may be, for God to withdraw his presence, and leave the soul for a time in darkness, or to fall into

some more gross sin than usual, some novel transgression, which arouses the soul from this dream, and convinces the backslider of his guilt, that he may flee with greater earnestness, and more perfect dependence, to the fountain opened for sin.

There is no reason to expect, that a sinner, who, for the first time, flees to Jesus, shall be accepted, which will not also apply, to the forgiveness of sins, committed after conversion. The impossibility, spoken of by Paul, of renewing those who fall away, after being once enlightened, does not proceed from any imperfection, on the part of Christ, nor any inability on the part of the Spirit. No, may God forbid the supposition, but it proceeds from the impenitence, which is produced; and, therefore, whoever sins, and is deeply humbled under a sense of it, and flees to the atoning Jesus, has as much ground to hope for pardon, for his present transgression, as he had, to hope for deliverance at first. The gospel makes no stipulation, as to the number, or magnitude, of the transgressions. The invitation is to sinners of all descriptions, and without exception. There is no sin, from which the glorious Redeemer cannot cleanse. There is no situation on earth, which man can conceive, that he cannot deliver from. Pardon is offered to every sinner, whether he have formerly professed faith, or have, till now, scoffed at religion. There is, no guilt, that infinite merit cannot atone for, no heart so depraved, that an infinite Spirit, cannot sanctify. But, although all this be true, and although God forgive ten thousand sins, as well as ten, and not seven times only, but seventy times seven, yet, it is evident, that this remission, is only given to those, who believe in Jesus; and it is no less clear, that those who have this faith, must have love, and those who love, must obey. Whoever, then, hopes to be saved by Jesus, must deny himself, and desire

to be saved, from the love and power of sin. He cannot sin wilfully—he cannot yield himself a servant to sin, nor indulge in iniquity. On the contrary, he hates sin—strives against it, and because it still prevails in his heart, still carries on a war within him, and still, in many cases, overcomes him, he bemoans himself, and confesses his weakness, and transgression, to his Father, pleads for pardon, through the merit of Jesus, and prays for the sanctifying influence of the Spirit, at the same time, that he is more careful, not to grieve the Spirit, by his sin, and to cultivate more diligently, the fruits of the Spirit.

If any man suppose that this doctrine is favourable to licentiousness, let him reflect, that there is no other, by which a sinner, can be saved from despair, than by that of the atonement, of imputed righteousness, and of the promise of the Spirit. And, before he argue against the moral tendency of this, let him look into the mind of a Christian, who renounces all hope from his own works, which he considers as worse than nothing. Let him behold the bitter suffering, which every true disciple feels, when, like Peter, he yields to sin. No Christian can indulge in sin, and willingly continue its slave. He must repent, and that speedily. Every sin is productive of much sorrow, a firm resolution to avoid it in future, and a more earnest application, for an increase of faith, and the aid of the Spirit. The effect of sin, in a wicked man, is scarcely perceived, his conscience is not tender, and any fear, he feels, proceeds from apprehensions of punishment alone, without any regard to the affront offered to God. The Christian is sorry, with godly sorrow, he has offended God, injured his own soul, fallen from his first love, diminished his spiritual comfort, indulged in that, which brought Jesus to the cross, and done that, which may prove a stumbling stone to others. If any man wish to know,

whether his contrition be godly, he has a mark by which he can discover this, as well as whether his faith be sincere—"faith worketh by love"—"godly sorrow worketh reformation." He seeks, earnestly, the forgiveness of his Father, and has no peace, until he obtain it. He seeks reconciliation, through the reconciling blood of Jesus, which speaketh better things than that of Abel, which crieth, not for vengeance, but forgiveness. He seeks pardon, through the infinite merit and intercession, the infinite love and power of Christ, and for his sake implores, that he may be renewed, by the Holy Spirit. If a man feel deep contrition, indignation against himself, hatred at sin, firm resolution, by the grace of God, to avoid it in future, watchfulness against offending, and, if he flee for refuge, from his fears and guilt, to the peace-speaking blood of Jesus, his compassionate High Priest, he may hope, that his repentance is sincere, and that he is still a partaker of Christ. But, if his comfort arise, merely, from some variation in his mind and affections, by which he views his sin, as less dangerous and less sinful, than at first, or, if his impressions be, merely, obliterated by time, which impairs all things, he is yet a stranger to the only foundation, on which he can, safely, build his hope. A Christian has no rest within, no peace, till he feel that he is reconciled to God, and that he has faith in Jesus, for the remission of his sin. He has no peace, until his Father lift upon him the light of his reconciled countenance. His hope and consolation, come alone from Jesus, as his Saviour; and his earnest cry is, that the joy of his salvation may be restored, and his pardon sealed. His fall, produces deep humility, a greater sense of his own weakness, more lively views of his depravity, more steady reliance on the imputed righteousness of Christ, more love, more conformity to the will of God, more watchfulness, more

earnest prayer, and greater anxiety, for the sanctification of the Spirit. He studies, not to relapse into indolence, not to lose sight of his frailty, and the power of the flesh, but to set the law of the Lord, continually, before him, and to run his race with perseverance. He avoids temptation, for he knows he is weak. He supplicates the aid of the Spirit, to mortify his evil desires and passions; and warned by the past, trusts not, henceforth, in his own strength. His humility is not for a day only, but he strives to continue in humility and faith, and is more and more thankful, for the rich mercy of God in Christ, is more weaned from the vanities of time, and more set on those things which are above. His fall shows him his weakness, gives a blow to spiritual pride, and by the grace of God, excites him to work out his salvation, with fear and trembling. Blessed then may be the fall. Triumph not over me, O mine enemy; for though I fall, I shall rise again, and will take heed to my steps. Lord, I praise thee, says the contrite one—Lord, I bless thee,—Lord, I thank thee, and magnify thy mercy, that such a worm is permitted to live—that such a heart, may hope for sanctification. True, indeed, it is, true, indeed, I now feel it in the contemplation of what thou doest for me, to be, that it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive the great things thou preparest for those thou lovest. They, though feeble, though weakness itself, shall mount up with wings, as eagles, they shall walk, and not be weary, they shall run, and not be faint. Though poor and naked, lost and miserable, they shall be made rich and strong, and covered with a robe of righteousness. Though depraved, and unspeakably worthless, they shall be sanctified and made holy. As their corrupted bodies shall be changed, like unto the glorious body of their Lord, so shall their souls, their guilty corrupted souls,

be changed, like unto his soul, by the power of the Spirit ; and they, ignorant, weak, depraved creatures, shall be made strong in the Lord, perfect in holiness, through the imputed righteousness of Christ, and have their minds enlightened and sanctified, even by the Spirit of the Lord. Let not then any man despair. There is a fountain opened for sin and pollution, which never shall be dried up, and the waters of which are ever efficacious. There is a High Priest, who ever liveth, to make intercession for his people, and who is heard always. But although through him, the Christian obtain remission of his sins, and may not be punished in this life for them, yet, there is no promise to that effect. His Father may see it necessary to chastise him here, for the good of his soul ; but it is in mercy and not in anger. It is to wean him from sin, and not for the destruction of his soul. So great is the love of God, that even if temporal chastisement may be spared, it shall be spared. But when, for the sake of the church, or the good of the Christian's soul, affliction is necessary, then it shall be inflicted, mentally or bodily. David was forgiven his sin, but because he had given occasion for the enemies of God to blaspheme, the son of Bathsheba was taken from him. Those, then, who suffer after sinning, are not to view their sufferings as indications that God hath forsaken them, and hath begun their punishment already, but as paternal chastisements intended to wean them more from sin, and lead them to greater faith, to more fear respecting sin, and to more love to God. Above all, let them not once imagine, that their sufferings, whether these consist in grief and darkness of mind, or pain of body, or loss of friends, or of fortune, have any thing expiatory in them, or can in any degree, atone for their guilt. It is to Jesus, and his sufferings alone, that they must look, whenever they think of atonement. " If any man sin, we

have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous."

To comfort, still more, those who mourn under a sense of sin, let them consider, that others have actually experienced the same evil, and, by the same sacrifice, have been freed, from both the power and punishment of sin. Listen to the confessions of David, and the prophets, and take encouragement, from the mercy shown to them—encouragement, not to sin, that grace may abound, God forbid, but encouragement to hope for mercy, through Christ. "O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. Mine iniquities are gone over my head, as an heavy burden—they are too heavy for me. I am troubled—I am bowed down greatly—I go mourning, all the day long—I will declare mine iniquity—I will be sorry for my sin. Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee. Forsake me not, O Lord. O my God, be not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin, for I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness. Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation. Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger towards us to cease. Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee. In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee, for thou wilt answer me." "O Lord, the great and dreadful God, we have sinned, and have com-

mitted iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face. O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away. O Lord, hear—O Lord, forgive.” “I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” “O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me. In the truth of thy salvation draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it. I am poor and needy—make haste unto me, O God. Thou art my help and my deliverer.”

These addresses to God are recorded for our edification. They mark the bitter distress which prevailed in the soul, from a sense of sin, especially sin after knowledge, and afford this conclusion, that they would never have been preserved in scripture had it not been intended that others should employ them, and trust to the mercy which is supplicated. The word of God testifies the abhorrence of God at sin, but it holds out likewise encouragement to repentance and remission of all sin, through Jesus. What is said to those who had fallen from their first works: “Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works.” “O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.” “I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away.”

When Jesus rose from the dead, the apostle who denied him received a special message from his forgiving Lord, to inform him of his resurrection. Thy disquiet, O frail Christian, thy remorse, thy trembling application to a throne of grace, are proofs that he who prayed for Peter hath also prayed for thee. Marvellous loving-kindness, which bears with creatures so prone to backsliding, which, for their redemption, gave a sacrifice of infinite value, and which

continues to recover them from all their ungrateful wanderings!

To conclude this subject; it may still be urged that there is a sin unto death, which shall not be forgiven. This is declared to be blasphemy against the Holy Spirit; and intimation of it was given by Jesus, when the Jews said he had an unclean spirit. This is a sin which no Christian can commit, because the very profession of Christianity is contrary to it, and therefore it does not apply to the present subject.

But there are other passages, particularly in the Epistle to the Hebrews, very alarming, and which call for constant watchfulness. "It is impossible," says Paul, "for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the power of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame." "If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment. He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy. Of how much sorer punishment is he worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" Now, not to enter into any minute examination of what that guilt is, let me briefly say what it is not. It is certain that every Christian does sin, for sin is never wholly subdued on earth, therefore these passages do not apply to every sin. There is no circumstance in which a man is placed, and under which, when he sins, he may not, even although he be strongly tempted, be said to yield voluntarily to the sin. He feels that he might have

resisted, that he actually yielded, and was not irresistibly impelled. There is no sin, then, which is involuntary. We cannot, therefore, consider the expression "wilful sin," in its extensive meaning, otherwise all sins might be said to be wilful. It must, then, mean a deliberate wilful return to the ways of vice, and an intentional departure from Christianity, a renunciation of the obedience of faith, and a return to the pollutions of the world. It must be accompanied with such a relapse into the love of sin, and to the indulgence of it—such an abandonment of faith and love, as must make the case very evident. Those who have sinned, but feel contrition, and flee to Christ for pardon, do not come under this description. The very circumstances, of their feeling godly sorrow, hatred to sin, and anxiously imploring forgiveness, through the sacrifice of Christ, are proofs that they have not sunk into that dreadful state, the characteristic of which is impenitence. There is one other passage still to be noticed, in the same epistle, where the Hebrews are admonished to look diligently, "lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who, for one morsel of meat, sold his birth-right; for ye know how, that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance," or, as it is also translated, "no way to change his mind, though he sought it carefully with tears." The object of this passage certainly is, to make men watchful against sin, by setting before them the danger of yielding to it. Those who despise the birth-right, and think so little of it, that they will give it up for some temporary indulgence, who willingly barter the one for the other, have no small cause to fear, lest the exchange, being made, shall be confirmed. This ought to make all men careful; but it is not a ground of despair to those who are overtaken in a fault, unless they felt a

determination to renounce Christ, and enjoy sin. We cannot be too watchful against sin ; but if we have yielded, let us not add to it impenitence or despair, but pray for pardon.

“ Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession ; for we have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was, in all points, tempted, like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace, to help in time of need.”

V.

The gospel affords strong hope and consolation to those who fear that they may one day fall, and make shipwreck of their faith. The hope of perseverance is founded on the doctrine of election and adoption, on the positive assurance of God, and on the recorded experience and persuasion of the apostles.

Christians are declared to be chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world, and to be predestinated into the adoption of children, being elect, according to the foreknowledge of God. The sufferings of Christ were decreed from all eternity, and it is not to be supposed that the effect of those sufferings should be left to the choice of man, or that it should depend on the wayward and wicked hearts of men, what number should be redeemed by those sufferings. Jesus, in his prayer to the Father, expressly says, “ Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him ;” and we are informed, that by the preaching of the apostles, as many as were “ ordained to eternal life,” believed. The consequence of election

is, that the elect hear and obey that call, which others only hear, but do not obey. Every man who feels within him a sincere desire to obey the call, has, in so far, an evidence that he is elected, for, if he were not, he should not feel this desire. The obedience to the call, is accompanied with faith, and adoption into the number of children. They receive the spirit of adoption; for, if they be united to Christ, they must be children, even as he is a Son. Now, the consequence of election and adoption, must be security. Those who are elected to eternal life, must obtain it. Those who are adopted as children, must have God for their Father, and no son of God can ever perish.

If there be such states as election and adoption, there must be security. It would, indeed, be a direct contradiction, to say, that these states could exist, without a security, so great, that it must be impossible for the elect to perish. This impossibility, indeed, is noticed by our Saviour, who, speaking of the means of deception which should afterwards prevail, says, that they should deceive, if it were possible, the very elect; that is, assuredly, declaring it to be impossible to deceive them. But the general principle being necessarily true, it still comes to be a question, how the Christian knows that he is elected and adopted; for, if he had this knowledge, then the doctrine being admitted, he must be as certain of salvation, as if he were already in heaven. A man must be conscious of the state of his mind and affections, if that state be very decided. He must know, whether he believe the doctrines of the gospel, and must also know, whether he feel their power. He must know, whether he hate sin, and regret that he ever sins; whether he love God, and feel a constant sense of his presence, and a pre-eminent desire to obey and please him; whether he depend firmly, and solely,

on Christ for salvation ; and whether he be anxious for the influence of the Spirit, and cultivate the graces of the Spirit. The distinguishing mark, by which our Saviour declared that true disciples might be recognised, was this—"By their fruits, ye shall know them ;" and the same test discovers to a man the state of his own soul. It is by attending to the fruit of the Spirit, there, the sanctifying effect on his heart, that he knows he possesseth the spirit of adoption, and is of the elect number. John says, "These things have I written to you that believe, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." Now, the things which he had written, and by which they were to have this knowledge, were, that he who had the Son, had life, and had also the witness of the Spirit, to that effect. But may he not deceive himself? May not his passions, and temporary feelings, mislead him, and self-love speak peace, where no peace is? May not his religious disposition pass away, as the morning cloud, and the early dew? These are trying questions, but the answer is consoling. So long as he retains faith, and its fruits, he has evidence, within him, that he is a Christian. The continuance of a state of faith, and love, is a good proof, and his daily, earnest prayer, is a certain mean, of obtaining a continuation of this. If he fall, it is his own fault, he must neglect the appointed means of preservation. He is sensible of his weakness, and natural depravity, but trusts in the power and love of Christ ; and, the consciousness of this trust, gives him confidence. He who, after examining his heart, finds, that he trusts to Jesus for salvation, and to his Spirit for sanctification, that he does hate sin, and laments that he is ever betrayed into it, and who, though conscious of the coldness of his love, and the imperfection of his service, can yet say, sincerely, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee,

has reason to conclude, that he is a disciple of Jesus. But, Christianity, does not consist, in one act. A man is not made a Christian, by one act of his mind, in which he believes, and loves, and devotes himself to God, as he receives an estate, by one instrument, and then, has nothing more to do. Christianity is a perpetual act of the mind—a permanent disposition of the heart; it is to be kept up, from day to day, through the whole of life. It consists, in various acts and duties, in the exercise of faith, love, humility, watchfulness, hatred to sin, obedience to every part of the law of God, self-denial, and constant regulation of the desires and thoughts. It consists, in laying aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and running the race set before us, with perseverance, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. Now, he who lives in this spirit, cannot fall away, and, as the Christian trusts in God for help to do so, prays for the influence of the Spirit, and strives to do that, which he prays he may be enabled to do, he shall continue in the faith. He cannot both maintain this spirit, and sin deliberately. But he may say, although I have passed months or years, and the present day, in a dependence on Christ, I may fall to-morrow. His very fear of falling, prevents it, for it produces humility, watchfulness, and prayer for faith and strength. Those who fall, do so, from not being afraid, from trusting, too much, to their own strength. He who professeth faith, can never apostatize, but it is equally certain, that he can never, deliberately, indulge in sin. He who is humble, watchful, diligent, and trusts in Christ, shall never fall away. He has the essential marks, of one of the elect, and his disposition, leads him, to follow the advice, of the apostle, “Give all diligence, to make your calling and election sure.” Prayer,

and watchful care, to obtain the object of our prayer, are the means, of obtaining this desired security. The whole gospel, confirms the security of the saints. The doctrine of election, adoption, justification, and sanctification, all imply perseverance. The sacrifice of Christ was complete—his gift to his people is complete; “by one offering, he hath perfected, for ever, them that are sanctified.” They are washed from all their sins, ingrafted into his body, and sealed with the Holy Spirit, till the day of their full redemption. Christ ever liveth to make intercession for them, he presents himself, in their stead, before the Father, and through him, they are accepted, and obtain all spiritual blessings. Whoever has the general marks of a Christian, may be comforted with the hope of perseverance, for, by the blessing of God, the disposition he cultivates to-day, shall continue to-morrow; and though sin be tempting, his heart deceitful, and Satan powerful, yet, the Spirit of God dwells in him, and preserves him. As his day is, so is his strength; and amidst all his fears, hope never forsakes him, for it is steadily fixed, on the all-powerful, and sufficient sacrifice of Christ, and is animated by the consideration, that being made a partaker of the divine nature, he is united to Christ, or “joined to the Lord;” and has, therefore, fellowship with him in all things. He has fellowship in his sufferings, in his righteousness, in his acceptance by the Father, in his resurrection, and in his glory. It is therefore as impossible for those who are united to the Lord, to perish, as it is for Christ’s work of redemption, to be abolished or blotted out. Christ, who is their life, must ever live in them. They cannot die, for they have eternal life within them, which cannot be extinguished, even by their own corruption and coldness, for they still pray, and still endeavour to watch; and he who declared, that he

would not quench the smoking flax, continues to animate and preserve them.

The elect are preserved by the Spirit of God ; and this preservation, is conducted, by maintaining within them, lively views of their weakness and guilt, with firm faith in the atonement of Christ, and love to him, who hath washed them, and sanctified them. Let the elect, then, give all diligence, to co-operate with the Spirit, in those things.

Strong hope of perseverance, is also derived, not only, from the doctrine of election and adoption, but from the positive assurance of God. Jesus saith of his disciples, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." If there were no other assurance, this alone would be sufficient ; but we have, in addition, the prayer of Jesus, to the Father, in their behalf, and we know that he is always heard : "Holy Father, keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are ; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." If Christ be in them, it is impossible that they can perish. Amidst all their temptations he says unto them, "Fear not, little flock, for it is the Father's good pleasure, to give you the kingdom." "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee." "All power is given unto me, in heaven, and on earth ;" and "he is able to save, unto the uttermost, all who come unto him," not to save them for a time, but for ever. The Ephesians are told, that the elect are blessed in Christ, with all spiritual blessings, and, consequently, with perseverance ; and Peter tells the saints, that they are "kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation." If the power of God be exerted to keep them, then, they shall be safe indeed.

The experience of the apostles, in their own souls, and the encouragement they gave, to the first converts, ought also to be strong consolation to us. What says Paul, on this subject? "The Lord, shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me, unto his heavenly kingdom." Paul, had no Spirit, which is not also imparted to us, and no assurance of faith, which is not common to other Christians. "I know," says he, "whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." Here, we have a testimony, to the comfort religion affords, in the prospect of futurity. The hope is built, on the power and faithfulness of God, and these shall endure for ever; they are infinite in degree, and did we trust in these, as we ought to do, nothing could make us dismayed. Paul, does not, merely, give his own hope, but assures the saints, that they may have like confidence. "The Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil." "He who hath begun a good work, will finish or perform it, until the day of Christ."

If we look into heaven, we shall there see the Mediator of the new covenant, feeling with tender sympathy, all our sorrows and necessities, and knowing, and interceding for all the sins and wanderings of the weakest and the coldest of his people. And just as specially as if we were the sole objects of a Redeemer's love, or a Redeemer's sufferings, does he bestow upon us the full measure of watchfulness and governance over our days on earth, and exert his mediation in heaven, and extend his communications of his Spirit to our hearts. An assurance of the minute superintendence and perpetual intercession of Christ, till the last enemy be overcome, and the soul enter into the joy of heaven, must afford strong consolation to those who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them. The anchor of the soul, both sure

and steadfast, is fixed within the vail, where is the mercy-seat, and the ark of the covenant, "whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus," "to appear in the presence of God for us." This anchor which entereth into "the holiest of all," cannot give way, nor can we be lost in the tempest, for we do not hold by it by our own strength, but are, like a ship, moored securely by its stable fixture. Amidst all our doubts, and fears, then, we look up into the Temple, and behold the unceasing and omnipotent mediation of Him who is not only both Priest and Sacrifice, but also King of Righteousness and King of Peace, and thereby rejoice in the sure arrival of that hour when the soul shall have fully, and for ever, obtained in heaven the blessed benefits of that priestly ministration which, we are assured, is effectually carried on in our behalf, during our pilgrimage on earth.

The Christian must not confine his view of Christ's work to what was done for him on earth; he must look up to heaven, and see there what Jesus is still doing for him. He is there as *his* Saviour—he is there in his behalf, carrying on a work without which his sufferings here could be of no avail. We must have a priest as well as a sacrifice, and must constantly depend on the continued aid and intercession of the Redeemer. Were that suspended for one hour, where must we be?

Let Christians, then, take encouragement from all these sources of consolation, endeavouring to have their faith in constant and lively exercise, their views steadily directed to Jesus, who hath ascended from the cross into heaven, and recollecting that they are not kept by their own strength, but by the power of God, and the influence of his Holy Spirit, bestowed upon them through Christ. Let them trust in the faithful promises of God, and the all-prevailing and continual intercession of Jesus, whose love is infinite,

and whose spirit slumbereth not nor sleeps. Ah! here is our security, not that we keep ourselves, but that we, amidst all our weakness and wanderings, are kept by the power of God, and that he will graciously make us follow the cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, and be our stay and defence till we reach the "city of habitation."

VI.

The gospel holds out strong consolation to those who are in affliction. This life is, to every man, a state of suffering and probation. Some sufferings, such as pain, sickness, loss of friends, and disappointments, are common to all men, and intended to produce the same moral effect on all. Others are peculiar to the Christian, and proceed from his manifold temptations, or the scoffs he may receive, on account of his profession, from wicked and ungodly men. But these afflictions, whether of the one kind or the other, are all intended to try his faith, to improve his heart, to lead him to greater dependence on God, more conformity to his law, and more desire after his calling. They are intended to wean him from an undue attachment to this life, to lead him to desire, more earnestly, a better place, to serve as a chastisement for sins, and excite to reformation of conduct, to increase his brotherly love and sympathy for those in distress, to try the strength of his reliance on God, his resignation to his will, and his faith in his promises; and by exercising faith, to prove the means of strengthening it, that it may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory. Afflictions, then, are salutary dispensations, grievous indeed in the present time, but working the "peaceable fruits of righteousness" in those who are exercised by them. Temporal affliction is peculiarly adapted

to excite resignation, and to wean us from this world ; spiritual affliction to strengthen faith ; but both produce, more or less, the same effects. It therefore becomes every one, who is afflicted, to consider the intention of affliction, and endeavour to be improved thereby, and to have it sanctified unto him. It does not come fortuitously, but is wisely appointed, by his Father, who afflicteth not any willingly, but for their profit, who afflicteth his children, not in fury, but in mercy, and who employeth the rod no longer than it is necessary. We know not what is good for us, but God knoweth, and, for the sake of Christ, bestoweth it. Affliction is a precious gift, as certainly as health and prosperity, and often effects that which these have failed to accomplish. The great end of affliction is to improve the soul in christian graces, to bring the heart back from the ways of sin. "Before I was afflicted," says David, "I went astray." "It is good for me, that I have been afflicted." Miserable are they, who are afflicted without improvement. To them, the present evil is but the beginning of sorrow ; or, if they really be of the number of God's children, one calamity and distress shall be added to another, until the necessary end be accomplished. Let those, then, who are in sorrow consider the purpose to be produced ; let them hear the voice of the rod, and pray and strive, that they may obey it. Thus shall they have it blessed unto them, and, in good time, be relieved from it. By viewing it as appointed by God, and by drawing near to him, as a merciful Father, they shall obtain consolation and support under their affliction, and, ultimately, deliverance from it. True it is, that we shrink back from suffering and tribulation, but hereafter we shall bless God for these marks of his love and mercy, and even here, may, by his grace, be enabled to feel and acknowledge the value of a Father's love. Under

affliction, there is often obtained a knowledge of the glory, the sovereignty, and the mercy of God, never before possessed, and a vision of the sanctuary, and of Him who dwells therein, more lively than was ever before seen, and a communion more intimate and refreshing, with the spirits of the just, than was ever before enjoyed.

When the mind is deprived of one enjoyment, it seeks for another, and it may so happen, that there may thus be courted as an acquisition, or hailed as a blessing, something which, the day before, would have been looked on with indifference, perhaps, rejected with contempt. These substitutes, however, for the loss which has been sustained, although they may, afterwards, come to be highly prized, are, at first, mere substitutes, and the restoration of the lost enjoyment would be welcomed with transport. This fact, which it would be vain to dispute, rests on a principle, which holds true, also, in the estimate which is often formed of religion. When any earthly comfort is swept away, and the soul is suffering under all the bitterness of bereavement, or, when the world itself seems to be receding, and life drawing to a close, the mind, if it be not altogether sunk into despondency or despair, immediately seizes on any comfort which can be offered, and the hopes and solacements of religion are then, when nothing else can be obtained, both readily and anxiously received. But it will be well to remember, that as one inferior temporal comfort is ardently welcomed, when a higher one is taken away, but still, only received, as the best substitute which can be obtained, so, in many instances, the hopes and consolations of religion, are only admitted to supply the place of dearer objects, and hold merely a negative place, or that of substitution. Who has not seen the criminal receive, with most apparent sincerity and fervour, all the pro-

mises and blessings of religion, so long as he believed that he was done with the world ; but no sooner did a reprieve arrive, than the world once more regained its influence, and the heart went forth after its old enjoyments. Now, affliction and disappointments do act on the Christian's mind just as on other men, in this respect, that both, by the privation and the sufferings they endure, are, by the constitution of their nature, led to seek other sources of enjoyment. But there is this mighty difference, that when there is no change of heart, there is a mere negative or passive reception of the gospel, as a substitution for happiness, which has been lost, but which is still regretted, and still considered as a preferable good. There is no positive, and determined, and active preference given to religion. The love of the world is not extinguished, but only borne down, by disappointment ; the power of sin, and the relish for it, are not destroyed, but only suspended ; the old principles, and desires, and longings, are not rooted out, but only slumbering ; and no sooner can they be indulged, than they spring up, active and overpowering as ever. With the Christian it is different ; for, whether affliction have, first of all, led him to seek the consolations of religion, or have afterwards induced him to seek more of his happiness thence, in either case, he receives the gospel as a positive enjoyment, and not unwillingly as a substitute for the world ; and by the removal of temporal enjoyment, by the various disappointments of life, or sufferings of body, he comes, by the grace of God, to relish more highly, and give a more decided, and a more earnest preference to the doctrines and the consolations of the gospel. As the world goes down, religion is more prized. It is not received with backwardness, and as a substitute, but it holds the first place in his affections, and he strives to keep out all other substi-

tutions. Such are the happy effects of affliction. As the light of the world is extinguished, the glorious Sun of righteousness is seen to shine more brightly, the hold of this earth on the soul is loosened, the power of the world to come is rendered more predominant, and whether the suffering be continued or removed, whether it be viewed as a call, or a chastisement, the same decided and permanent result is produced.

The consolation afforded by religion, to those under affliction, is derived from the following considerations and views, brought home to the heart with power, by the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. It is in itself slight, and nothing in comparison of what their sins deserve; it is but for a season—for a very short time; it is wisely appointed by the Father of mercies, and shall work for good. It leads to a true and just view of the perishable and unsatisfactory nature of all temporal enjoyments and pursuits, and of the glorious nature of that eternal life, promised through Jesus. It gives rise to a more earnest desire for that inheritance, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, and to more exquisite feelings, resulting from the hope of glory. It produces more lively views of the love of Christ, and the riches of the grace of God, and a desire to cultivate, more closely, communion with God, and to obtain from him, and him alone, comfort and holy joy. Amidst all the tribulations and evils of life, nothing is so great a cordial and support, as anticipating prospects of the happiness of heaven, and of an entrance into the presence of Jesus. These make men think little of the pleasures of this life, and little of its calamities and troubles. They comfort the soul in every situation, and excite, at all times, warm and lively feelings of gratitude, love, and faith towards Jesus, who loved the souls of men.

There are some prolonged afflictions, which, from

the fears, anxieties, and vexations they produce, as well as from the uncertain prospect of their termination, seem peculiarly intended to wean us from the world, by convincing us, that here we have no stable satisfaction, and also to increase our trust in God, by inducing us, under our misgivings, to remember that all shall end well with the Christian. Day after day he may pray for relief to his anxious mind, and a removal of those clouds which hang over his prospect. His prayers may be long of being heard, and his health may suffer from vexation of spirit. He may be weary of waiting for comfort, and in the bitterness of his heart, may not only say, all these things are against me, but rashly anticipate, and predict, the coming of greater evils. What is the lesson to be read? Is it not that the heart is not yet subdued to a holy acquiescence in the goodness, wisdom, and faithfulness of God, and that painful means must be employed to strengthen his faith, increase his patience, animate his hope, and bring him to a humble, sanctified submission to the will of God. Blessed fruit of affliction!—blessed and necessary preparation for the holy state of heaven! Does he not hear a voice, saying, confine not your view to the present hour, but stand by, and behold the issue of all this, and rest assured that it shall be well. By prayer, and reading the word of God, he comes no longer to be impatient, day after day, for an end of his fears, or doubtful as to the result. He is comforted by such passages as these, and many more he will find in the Bible:—“Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement. I will not offend any more. That which I see not teach thou me.” “A man’s heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.” “What time I am afraid I will trust in thee; though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me.” “All the paths of the Lord

are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies." "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee."

In that peculiar affliction, produced by the misconduct of dear friends, the Christian takes comfort from the considerations I have offered, and the promises of the gospel. He prays for the improvement, and everlasting happiness of his friends, and looks to that covenant of his Redeemer, which is well ordered in all things and sure; and whilst he prays for strength, patience, and consolation, is enabled to say, nevertheless, it shall be well with me, for this covenant is "all my salvation and all my desire."

Afflictions are intended, to the children of God, as tender mercies, as necessary dispensations, for the production of that state, in which they shall be made meet for the inheritance of the saints. They are, therefore, promised to Christians, and are appointed, as certainly as the mansions above. If affliction form but a small part of their lot, if they feel little tribulation, little heaviness, they have great reason to search more carefully into their real state. If ye be without chastisement, says Paul, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons. Jesus, and all his apostles, have led Christians to expect suffering, and to consider it as part of the promised mercy of God. Jesus never gave his disciples reason to expect ease and worldly comfort, but he directed their hopes to the blessed and glorious place, which he went to prepare for them. He uniformly inculcated the necessity of their taking up the cross, and following him. For our sakes, he took up the cross. He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Though a Son, yet he learned obedience, and was made perfect, through suffering. It was necessary that he should be so, that God, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the Captain of

salvation perfect through sufferings, and that the High Priest, who was to intercede for them, should have a fellow-feeling of their infirmities. In all this trial, in the temptation of Satan in the wilderness, in the contradiction of sinners, in poverty and affliction, in the absence of God on the cross, and in death, Jesus endured, and was approved, leaving to us a powerful example, in addition to his pure precepts. He was in this respect a practical teacher—he was a prophet as well as a priest—and he, who separates these two characters, in the life of Christ, has no right to look to him in his remaining character of king. The Socinians, indeed, view the life and sufferings of our Redeemer merely as an example; but we reject the cold and comfortless heresy; and whilst we view Jesus as a prophet, instructing us in the will of God, and setting us an example to follow, we receive him also as a priest, who by his sufferings made an atonement for sin. It is as a prophet, only, that he is our example, for we cannot imitate him in those parts of his character which are peculiar to him as our Redeemer. Whoever follows him must not only expect suffering, but is called by the apostle to rejoice, inasmuch as he is a partaker of Christ's sufferings, and is admonished to think it not strange, concerning the fiery trial which is to try him. The result of this view of the sufferings of Christ, and our fellowship in this respect, in these sufferings, is given to us by the apostle Peter: "Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves, likewise, with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." Now, the substance of this advice is, that as Christ suffered and endured all things according to the will of God, we ought to

live also in strict conformity to his holy will. We are no longer to consider ourselves as created for this world, but are to mortify our members which are on earth, to have our old man crucified with Christ, and our soul brought into an entire subjection to the will of God. We are to be taught by suffering the same mind, in every respect, which was in Christ, love to God and love to man. We are called to renounce this world, and the encouragement held out is, "If we suffer we shall also reign with him." We are "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon," adds Paul, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounded by Christ," in whom we are comforted with an everlasting consolation.

We are not to imagine that our sufferings, whether in body or mind, whether they be temporal afflictions or spiritual struggles, have any thing meritorious, or that voluntary penances can atone for former sins. We never can, in an expiating point of view, have any profitable sufferings, or be said to suffer with Christ. The expression, "partaking of Christ's sufferings," may, doubtless, be applied to our participating in the benefits of his sacrifice; but the strict import of the words refers not to this, but to partaking of the same mind which was in Christ, striving against temptation, resisting the devil, mortifying the flesh, renouncing and overcoming the world, counting every thing good which God appoints, being entirely resigned to his will, and glorifying him in every state. To know the mind, it is sufficient to consider the temper, of our Lord when he said, "If it be possible let this cup pass

from me, nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

The end and object of all our sufferings here, of whatever kind, is that we, like the Captain of our salvation, may be made perfect. It was the earnest prayer of Paul for his converts, not that they might be exempted from suffering, but that God, after they had suffered awhile, would make them perfect. Sufferings are means employed by God for advancing christian perfection, and are as necessary for the disciple of Jesus, as knowledge or meditation, or any of the appointed means of improvement, which are calculated to increase his faith. These sufferings, however, are not to be courted nor created. Temptations are not to be sought, but avoided. Let no man think that the sorrows of life, or the sufferings of the soul, are to avail him as an offering for sin, or that he is at liberty to search after them, in the vain hope of improving his mind by its own strength. God who hath promised to save him, and make him a partaker of the glories of heaven, and who hath promised such trials and sufferings as are fitted for his state, and calculated for his improvement, will not send one affliction that is not necessary and useful. He will so time it, and so support him under it, as to render it most advantageous to him, weaning him more from confidence in himself, more from this life, more from sin, and by lessening or destroying his ties to earth, making him place his desires more anxiously on heaven, increasing his faith, promoting a spirit of resignation, exalting his love, and making him live in more active preparation for that state, where there shall be no sin and no sorrow. Let the mourner consider the end of all affliction, that it is to take away sin. Let him study to have sin subdued within him, and to cleave more earnestly to God. Let him pray earnestly that affliction may

be sanctified to him, that God would enable him to improve by it, make him more meet for the inheritance of the saints, grant him patience to bear that which is laid upon him, and support and comfort him under it, by trust in his providence, resignation to his will, and the consoling hope of the gospel, and the influence of the Divine Spirit. Then, indeed, may the Christian say, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "We glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us."

In heaven, the state of the soul is that of complete SANCTIFICATION. That is the peculiar character of the glorified spirit, and the essential quality required for enjoying the blessedness of paradise. Were the sanctification partial, however great, the joy would be defective; but it is perfect and everlasting, and with delight, the soul says, Thy will be done. The work of Christ with his people is sanctification; the blessing he died to procure is sanctification; the end and object of all affliction is sanctification; the whole dealings and discipline of the Shepherd with his flock, is to promote sanctification. Every step the Christian takes in his progress, every improvement he makes, every joy or comfort he receives in his soul, every grace that flourishes, is connected with sanctification. This must be begun and carried on here, and the promise of God is true and faithful, that it shall be accomplished. The power of the world must give place to the dominion of heaven; the works of the flesh, to the fruits of the Spirit, and by, and through, the mercy of him, who pitieth them that fear him, he shall be more truly, and unreserv-

edly, enabled to say in every one respect, whether in hatred to sin, or obedience unto righteousness, whether in love to the Redeemer, or submission to his will, or reliance on his guidance, Thy will be done in my heart, as it is done in heaven. Sufferings may still abound, afflictions may still be felt, but they are both felt and received, as they are intended to be. They promote every grace, animate every spiritual desire, and advance our preparation and meetness for heaven, because, by the power of God, they increase our sanctification.

VII.

There are still two evils, so peculiar in their nature, that they require a separate consideration, more especially, as religion affords the only satisfactory consolation, under their pressure.

The first of these, is the death of our friends. The purest, and the most exquisite temporal pleasure, is that resulting from friendship, and what is, aptly, called natural affection. It gives a double relish to all other pleasures; it is a powerful solace, under the disappointments and distresses, which are met with in life. The human mind, is so constituted, as to be capable of forming attachments, which death itself cannot destroy, of forming a union with kindred souls, which is so intimate, that the object of affection, becomes almost a part of itself. Not to mention those attachments, formed from friendship alone, I may merely advert, to those ties of blood, by which parent and child, brother and sister, husband and wife, are bound together, with a strength of love and affection, which can be known, only, by experience. The dissolution of any of these ties, but, more especially that, subsisting between husband and wife, is little less than tearing away a part of the soul itself,

breaking up its most powerful temporal prop, and producing such a change, both by what is lost and what is felt, as to occasion a concussion in the mind, which, in many cases, goes near to destroy its fabric. Who, that has long rested his affection on a kind and supporting parent; or who, that has experienced the thousand different ways, by which a child entwines himself, around the heart of a parent, more closely, by far, than the ivy attaches itself, to the oak it covers; who, that has been blessed, with the most perfect of all human happiness, resulting from that tender and most intimate union, by which two souls become as one, enjoy the same pleasures, feel the same pains, pursue the same thoughts, follow out the same engagements, sleeping and waking, are devoted to each other, with an affection, ripening with age, and more firmly riveted, by inclination and habit; who, that has experienced this, or the dear love, peculiar to brethren of one family, can contemplate the destruction of this happiness, without shrinking back from the dreadful prospect? Few there are, who have not suffered the loss of one dear relation, and some there be, who have followed to the grave, the last of their friends. Under that acute grief, which must attend a calamity, awful even in its mildest form, the gospel, with mildness and compassion, addresses the sufferer, "Sorrow not as those who have no hope."

Nothing in this life, nothing that the world contains, can afford consolation. The mind of some, may be insensible, in a great degree, to sorrow of this kind. Time, may obliterate the feelings of others, and a few may have their grief drowned in the cares or pleasures of life. But a mind of sensibility, must feel that which is the most severe of earthly calamities; and a rational being can only be comforted by rational means. Religion, suggests

various considerations, all of which, tend to afford support to the mind, under the loss of friends. Do we view the dispensation, as it affects ourselves? The gospel teaches us, that it is good and proper. It hath not happened by chance, but was appointed by a wise and a merciful God. He did not judge it expedient, to deprive us sooner of this comfort, but it could not be continued a moment longer. This was the precise time, which his wisdom and goodness had fixed. We cannot read, or understand, the book of Providence here, but in a future state, we shall see clearly, that at this period, it was necessary for us to be afflicted, and to be afflicted, by the loss of this particular object. We shall see, that it was good for us, that it was so, and that had our friend been spared longer, both he and we should have had cause to regret it. A most powerful consolation, then, is derived from a firm dependence on Divine Providence, which produces a submissive resignation to the will of God, and an acknowledgment, not verbally, but from the bottom of the heart, that he hath acted well and wisely. Whilst the Christian feels the deep wounds of his mind, he does not murmur nor repine, but humbly and meekly sayeth, "The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord." He acknowledges the sovereignty of God, his right to do, in all respects, as he pleaseth, and bends to his will, as his God and Father. He adores him, as the ruler and disposer of all events, and as having an undoubted right to all that he hath. He firmly believes that the event was ordered in mercy, and shall be productive of good unto him. He is conscious of his own ignorance, respecting what is proper for him, and is persuaded, that God afflicteth not any, willingly, but for their profit. He therefore, though his sorrow be keen, and his sufferings great, is brought, not merely to acquiesce, in the

Divine will, but to be so persuaded, of the propriety of what is done, that, hard as the struggle might be, he would not undo it, although it were in his power. Here, then, is the triumph of Christianity, enabling a frail suffering creature, to adore the mercy, wisdom, and love of God, in taking away his greatest earthly comfort, enabling him, amidst all his tears, to praise God, to resign himself to his will, and to say, I know it shall be well with me in the end. Here, is the blessed fruit of this severe affliction, confirming his trust in Providence, and his resignation to the will of God, drawing him nearer to God, as his Father and his portion, and weaning him from this life, which he is soon to forsake.

But his views, are not solely confined to himself; he thinks, also, of his departed friend. The plan of Providence was fulfilled regarding him. He had finished his course; he could not be taken away sooner, nor could he be permitted to continue longer. This day he had completed all that was given him to do. Now his trials are over—his labours are at an end—his sorrows and afflictions have ceased—sin is destroyed—it cannot follow him whither he has gone. He hath passed through the gate of death, into the mansions of glory. He hath exchanged a state of tribulation, for endless and inconceivable felicity. Already, hath he beheld Jesus in his glory, and at this moment is he singing the song of Zion, and ascribing praise, and honour, and blessing unto God, who hath redeemed him, out of all his troubles, and washed him from all his sin. Whilst I am left still, says the mourner, to struggle with guilt, and to endure the afflictions of this life, he hath reached that happy land, where there is no more sin, no more sorrow, no tears, nor afflictions, nothing but peace and joy, and light and glory. How glorious the change—how great his gain! Ought I not in-

deed to rejoice in his happiness, and to be comforted with the hopes of his salvation? How cruel to recall him to these dark regions, to this state of temptation and sin, were it in my power! It is selfish in me to regret his departure. I must feel my loss, but I will be consoled with the hope of his gain.

These reflections contribute farther to reconcile the sufferer to his loss, and give rise to another consolation of inestimable value—the hope of going to the same glorious place, and meeting again with his departed friend. The scriptures hold out this animating hope as a powerful consolation. An apostle was convinced that he could offer no greater comfort than this. He proceeds on the supposition that they who die perish not; that they sleep in Jesus, and shall rise again as certainly as he rose; that we shall be caught up, together with them, in the clouds, and be ever with the Lord. Our dear friend has only gone a little while before us. That happiness which he is now enjoying, and the knowledge of which comforts us in his departure, awaits us also. In a very short time our course, like his, shall be finished, our troubles shall be ended, sin shall be completely subdued, and through the same gate we also shall enter into the same glory. The prospect is no vain illusion. Every instant is bringing it nearer, and soon shall we behold this dear friend again. How glorious the meeting—how transporting the embrace! We shall join again in a pure, and holy, and perfect state, never more to part. We shall enjoy each other with increasing felicity, and shall participate in the same song of praise to him who hath redeemed us. But in this season of peculiar sensibility we must not limit our view to the mere prospect of again meeting with those who are taken from us, nor our hope of rejoicing to that of a happy reunion. That prospect, delightful as it

is, presents but a small part of the glory and blessedness of heaven. We then shall be free from all sin, and the soul shall be in a state of full and everlasting sanctification. With boundless and triumphant joy we shall adore the ever-blessed and glorious Trinity, and dwell in that resplendent brightness which cometh from the throne. Ah! who can imagine the extent of this heavenly glory, or the rapturous feelings with which kindred spirits, whilst with a seraph's smile, they smile on each other, shall say, Come, let us praise the Lord God Almighty, and ascribe blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.

These various considerations tend, by the blessing of God, to improve the mind, and fill it with peace and joy in believing. They powerfully lead the soul to Christ, and present, in a forcible manner, to the mind softened by sorrow, a lively view of the evil of sin, which hath brought so much misery into the world, of the rich grace of God who hath provided a Redeemer, and of the love and power of Christ, and of the glory of his kingdom. They impress upon the mind a deep sense of the value of religion, and the importance of that victory by which the sting of death hath been destroyed, and the glorious hope of eternal life bestowed upon men. They lead the soul to prize Jesus more highly, to see more clearly the excellence of his work, and his compassion to sinners. They manifest the vanity of this life, and powerfully convince the mind, that the happiness of man is to be sought beyond the grave, when sin shall be completely destroyed. Amidst all the sorrow which attends the mournful event, and under all the troubled thoughts of the soul, Jesus is resorted to as the resting-place, and his Spirit as the Comforter. To him does the soul look, as the Protector and

Redeemer of a departed friend, as the foundation of every hope beyond the grave, as the source of every consolation here. To him does the sorrowful heart cleave, as unto a kind and sympathising friend, nor does it cleave to him in vain. He who wept at the grave of Lazarus refuses not his Spirit of comfort to his disciple here. Earthly friends offer the consolation of sympathy, but they afford little relief except what springs from their encouraging the soul with the promises of God. But this friend, who sticketh closer than a brother, hath at his command all the sources of comfort. When the soul seeks support from him, unbosoms to him its grief, and rests on him for strength and consolation, the balm of healing is poured into the painful wounds. The Spirit of God, by inspiring sentiments best suited to the condition of the soul, and dwelling more richly and graciously within it, administers a relief which no man can bestow, and even inspires a song of praise and thanksgiving, in the midst of the furnace of affliction.

To those who have not yet met with these severe trials, or who still have dear friends remaining, I would suggest the necessity, both of gratitude to God for sparing these comforts, and of improving the blessings which remain. If we regret that we did not more fully enjoy all the advantages we might have derived from the society of those who have left us, or that in any respect we failed in our duty to them, let us be more anxious to conduct ourselves with surviving friends as we shall wish we had done when they also quit us. Above all, let us be careful to encourage our friends in the ways of holiness, and use our best endeavours to promote their spiritual good and our own. Should death cut them off in their sins, we shall be deprived of a most powerful consolation; for we have bid them an eternal adieu, and have only the small comfort of thinking, that by

being taken away they are prevented from adding to the measure of their iniquity. Let this dreadful consideration animate every one to use his best and most persevering endeavours for the salvation of all who are dear unto him. The only consolation the Christian can have in the agony of his grief is to look forward to that blessed place where his sorrows shall not only terminate, but be completely swallowed up in heavenly and holy joy.

VIII.

The last evil to be noticed under which the gospel affords strong consolation, is the prospect of death. The notions which different men form of death, and the views they take of it vary according to their state and disposition. Some look forward to it with fear and apprehension, only as a painful evil, a calamity respecting this life alone. They behold it as a termination of their pleasures and pursuits, and dread the struggle which may attend dissolution. Others, in their contemplation, consider it as a conclusion to all their present sorrows and pains, and under their sufferings call for its friendly aid, without allowing themselves to reflect, that it may be only the entrance into endless woe. Of those who view it more justly, and feel the influence of a religious principle, some hail it as the end of their troubles, and the commencement of a happy state of existence, without connecting this prospect with that of the account they must give to the supreme Judge of the deeds done in the body. Others have the prospect of the solemn judgment they are to undergo, prevailing over the lively hope of glory. One or other of these two views must predominate in the mind of every Christian who contemplates the approach of death. The last is certainly felt with

increasing awe, as the moment of dissolution draws near, but thanks be to God, it does not cover the Christian with confusion, for he, at the same time, feels the power of Jesus to save. We cannot view the approach of our death, solely as respecting ourselves, but must reflect on its consequences to others, particularly to our family. Much anxiety arises from the fear of leaving a wife or children unprotected, and perhaps without support. This anxiety is natural, and, in so far as it leads a man to useful exertion, to obviate the expected evil, it is laudable. Whilst it is in his power, let him diligently endeavour to instil into his children the knowledge of God, to direct their hearts to love him, and to depend upon him; and whilst he thus trains up his little ones in the paths of peace, let him pray earnestly for the blessing of God, and the powerful working of the Spirit on the souls of his children. Let him, as a parent, use those means which God hath put in his power, of making provision for their temporal wants, but let him not be over anxious; for he who feedeth the young ravens, will not suffer his children to want. God hath hitherto provided for them, by means of the parent, and if he see fit to take away that particular mean, he hath others in reserve, for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. The life of the parent may be spared, and yet the children may, by that very circumstance, be reduced to beggary. It may be taken away, and the children liberally provided for, even in very unexpected circumstances. Let a trust in Providence, then, comfort those who are going down into the grave, leaving a widow or orphans behind them. The God of their fathers will be their God still, and will guide them through the journey of life. The will of God is good, his purposes are wise and merciful, and with this persuasion, let the dying Christian be comforted. Whilst

an opportunity is afforded, let all men be diligent in making an honest provision for their family, and in teaching them the ways of salvation, and let them afterwards, with confidence, commit the result to God.

Amidst all the calamities and disappointments of life, under pains and distresses, under every affliction of whatever kind, and above all, under the struggles against sin, and the sore sense of its prevalence, the great comfort, the cheering hope, is the expectation of that state of happiness and glory, promised by Christ. It is the prospect of heaven, which consoles the Christian here. This may be less intensely beheld in a state of prosperity, but in adversity it is a most powerful balm. A consideration that all the present evils are fleeting away, and that a glorious inheritance awaits us, must act as a cordial to the mind, under every grief and tribulation. But when we look forward to the possession of this bright inheritance, we must recollect, that death is the gate through which we enter into it.

Could we, in one comprehensive view, behold the multitude of human spirits which appears on this globe, we should every instant see some quitting this, their transitory abode, and others entering in their place, into existence here; and were one, who had already gone into eternity, to look back on the fleeting scenes of time, the immense population of a whole world, would appear like the myriads of motes which dance in the sunbeam, entering and disappearing with a rapidity, which, when measured by their everlasting condition, baffles all calculation or conception. But to him who is yet hurrying through time, the progress appears slow, and a thick cloud seems to hang at a distance between it and eternity. It is the cloud of death, and through it he must pass; into it he must enter, perhaps he already feels himself involved in its haze. What must be the feelings of a

man who knows that his numbered hours are expended, and that before the sun again rise, he shall be insensible to his light, and his eyes shall have closed for ever on time, and on all that is done in time. As he approaches that unknown and unseen state on which he is to enter, he ceases to think on that he is to leave, and looks forward with wondering inquiry, and hope and joy, to the new state which awaits him. He perceives that insensibility is stealing upon him, that he is gradually shut out from this world; his dim eye, and diminished sense, and wandering mind, testify that he is passing into that cloud which overshadows the valley of death, and that gate which leads at once from time to eternity. The last effort of reason and intelligence may be the conviction, that he is now done with this world. He takes one last glance of all that it contains, as affording a scene in which he has now neither part nor lot. His earthly joys and sorrows are at an end; and fain would he penetrate the darkness which still veils eternity. Where and what is heaven? How will God appear, and how will he be received? Will his departed friends be the first to welcome him, or shall he open his eyes first on the angelic host, and on Him who redeemed him? Ah! He it is, he feels who is to secure his entrance, and shield him, as a redeemed sinner, from the punishment he deserves. To behold the heavenly host, to meet with departed friends, is indeed a joyful hope; but there is one more blessed and more beloved now than all—he who hath been unto him the Angel of the covenant—and who, amidst all his sins and short-comings, under all his waywardness and transgressions, hath never left him nor forsaken him, and who is now waiting to receive and defend him, and introduce him into a place most transcendent in glory and in brightness, and filled with the resplendent hosts of angels and redeemed

spirits. But all the glory and brilliancy of the abode, all the blessedness of the inhabitants, proceed from him who sitteth on the throne, and unto whom they cease not to offer praise and thanksgiving. When the eye shall first open on this glorious scene, then shall the ear hear those seraphic sounds of praise, and the soul, in an instant, be transformed into one of the same glorious multitude, and be found uttering the same ecstatic praise.

It would be vain to attempt to describe the feeling of death, for that must vary in every possible way, and under every conceivable circumstance, both as regards the body and the mind. It is the sense of sin which arms death with its terrors; for the bodily pain is not necessarily so severe as that which is endured in many temporary ailments. The fear of death must be proportioned to the sense of sin, where that is not accompanied with confidence in the blessed and effectual remedy. Yet would I not wish to say that the approach of death is always attended with either painful dread to the careless, or exulting hope to the Christian. For, besides false views of the nature and the holiness of God, and the depravity of the human heart, that apathy of mind which is produced by the state of the body, weakens all impressions, so that both time and eternity may be viewed with equal listlessness and indifference. Whoever has experienced deadly and depressing sickness, must know how careless the mind becomes, and how devoid of interest even to great and urgent danger. Hence, as well as from spiritual infatuation, the wicked often have no bands in their death, and depart as serenely as the Christian. In both, the feeling may be blunted, and the mind may be borne down by the sinking body, and all its senses subjected, as if by a spell, to the influence of a perishing frame, so that the hour of death may seem to be the

victory of matter over mind, and a successful attack made by him, who hath the power of death, on the immortal part of man, before it be released from its tenement of clay. This hour exhibits a struggle between the disjointed powers of the mind, in that mysterious region of phantoms and dreams, which often must be entered, in passing from time to eternity, and which is only manifested to spectators, by the mixture of incoherent raving, with the mutterings of despair, uttered by the sinner, or the aspirations of a spirit, still hoping in God, amidst the desolations of the last enemy. These desolations are, indeed, soon at an end, for with the rapidity of lightning, truth dispels all the clouds and spectres of the valley of the shadow of death, even that "truth" which, in Jesus, is fully and gloriously displayed, the moment that the soul is released from its prison-house. And who can say, that when set free, from all the horrors of this last scene of delusion, the redeemed soul does not feel, that this deliverance has been slight indeed, when compared to the more dangerous, and unsuspected delusions of active life.

The anticipation of our dissolution is a profitable meditation, inasmuch as it leads our thoughts from the vanities of this world, and places them on that great object, which is to afford us consolation in the hour of death. By frequently thinking of our approaching end, we through the blessing of God, become better prepared for it, by having our faith in Jesus confirmed, and thus are made more meet for the inheritance of the saints. We have the fear of death subdued, and are animated to follow more diligently those, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.

In the near prospect, or in a lively view, of our dissolution, the gospel affords every consolation the heart can desire. The Redeemer of men hath given

us, through his death, strong hope in the hour of death. He hath abolished death for his people. To them death is a peaceful rest. He hath destroyed the sting of death, and made the grave a sanctified place. He is present in the last conflict, to support the soul under a sense of its guilt, that it may feel that sin is washed away. Jesus, who is the high priest of his people, hath made a sufficient atonement, and is ready, at the moment of dissolution, to receive the soul and present it, faultless and blameless, before God. The Spirit of God is present with the dying Christian, to afford him inward support, testifying unto him that he is a partaker of the divine nature, and strengthening his faith in Jesus.

In these awful moments, this world is viewed as nothing, and all its greatness, its pomp, its pleasures, cares, and pains, as nothing. Eternity is then perceived as swallowing up time. God is then beheld as infinitely holy, and the soul is astonished, that it never before saw, clearly, the purity of God and the evil of sin, which now appears to be a dreadful thing, capable of sinking the sinner to the depths of hell. The natural pollution of the soul, and the guilt of innumerable transgressions, are seen in strong and glowing colours. The mouth is stopped, and no plea can be found for pardon. Every thing appears now in its true light, and the soul fully admits the obligation of the law, and acknowledges that God is just, when he condemns sinners. But in all these views of the nature and effects of sin, the soul lays hold on the rich mercy of God in Christ, and by faith triumphs over fears and terrors. Then the power of religion is felt. Then the influence of the Comforter is perceived, and under much weakness, under a true sense of his own guilt, the Christian trusts to the righteousness of Jesus, and with hope commits his soul into his hand. He rejoices in the prospect of

death, which he welcomes as the messenger of peace, to introduce him into that glorious land, where he shall immediately behold the Father, who hath redeemed him; Jesus who died for him on the cross, and hath been his mediator through life; the Spirit who hath sanctified, preserved, and enlightened him, and who shall now dwell fully in him; angels who excel in strength, and praise God continually; departed friends who are waiting to embrace him, and to renew that kind intercourse which death, for a short time, suspended. He is introduced by death to an innumerable company of blessed spirits, and the souls of just men made perfect, from Adam to his own day, and he joins with them in loud hosannas to the Lamb who was slain. Sin is now completely subdued—all sorrow is at an end—his trials and afflictions are finished—and he is made perfect in holiness and felicity. It is death which introduces him into this happy state. He beholds its approach, with that degree of interest and agitation which the mind must feel, on the prospect of quitting for ever this life, and entering on a new and unseen state. But he beholds it without dismay, without fear or apprehension. He lifts up his head with eagerness, because his redemption draweth nigh. If he feel, it is for his friends, and not for himself, but he commits them to God, to that God whose protection he hath himself experienced, and who is able to comfort those who mourn.

There are speculations more curious than satisfactory, which may be entertained respecting the glorious scene which shall open, the moment death has performed his commission. Before dissolution, there may, by the bright vision of imagination, be presented a varying and beatific view of angels and patriarchs, and a goodly assembly of glorified spirits. Conjectures may be formed, how, and in what manner, some

dear departed friend shall be met, and whether he, first of all, may be permitted to hail the emancipated soul. There may arise in the mind, not yet separated from earth, a view of the resplendent and dazzling brightness of the glorious city, the everlasting inheritance, where all that can captivate and enrapture the eye, is to be met with in the scene. Curiosity may, for a time, dwell on these speculations and creations of the fancy, but as the hour approaches when the reality is to be beheld, one object more glorious, and more precious still, fills the heart, and fully engrosses the mind. Bright as the throne of the Lamb is conceived to be, and dear as departed friends are, who rejoice and adore before it, He who sits on the throne, Jesus the Son of God, is, beyond all, the object of attraction. I doubt not, that the soul of every Christian, if conscious at death, is steadily fixed—not on the brightness and glory of heaven—not on the high praises of its happy inhabitants—not on the wonders which are to be so soon beheld, and the dear friends now to be met, but on the amazing love, and redeeming mercy, and gracious power of Him who hath procured all these blessings.

The disease which precedes death, may be lingering and painful, but death itself is not to be feared. It is more terrible to those who behold, than to him who suffers it. We know not the state of mind in every Christian, or whether sensibility remain to the last, though the power of showing it be lost. But one thing is certain, that where the power of utterance is left, and the approach of death foreseen, the Christian bears testimony to the power and value of the doctrines of the gospel, recommends them to others, and professes to derive his only consolation and support from them himself. With his latest voice he declares, ‘ I know whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto

him. I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth me the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. My trials are now come to an end. My temptations are at a conclusion. Sin shall have no more dominion over me. I am going to see those dear friends whose death I have so long lamented, but now I rejoice that they are where I hope to be. I am going to behold Jesus, who loved me, and died for me; and how glorious the thought, I am going where I shall be qualified to praise and love him, and where I shall understand more clearly what he hath done for me. Trust in Jesus, my children. Love him and keep his commandments, and in a short, a very short time, you shall follow me, and we shall be happy together. Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. Lord Jesus, receive my soul!

Could language transfer to one man a transcript of the mind of another, in all its different views, and intensity of feeling, then should we find, in the immediate prospect of quitting the vain and painful pursuits of time, and entering on the glories of eternity, such a communication made, and such a commanding and irresistible impression produced, as should far surpass all that the most powerful eloquence hath hitherto been able to accomplish. But even the most copious language is inadequate for the purpose, and the most energetic expressions fail; for the spirit triumphs over the weakness of the mortal state, and a conception of this triumph, no words can communicate to another. And hence it is, that whilst we draw near the dying Christian, who already is intensely fixing his view on the heavenly prospect

which is opening to him, and shutting out the fading visions of time, we can know but little of what is passing in the mind of this pilgrim, who is already done with the world. The heavenly expression of the countenance—the steadfast hope, and seraphic joy which beam in the eye, not yet dimmed by death—speak far more than words; and that irresistible, though unheard, power of sympathy, which enables one mind to participate in the feelings of another, to a degree far beyond the power of words to effect, does excite a persuasion and conviction of the value and the blessings of religion, which, whether it be lasting or not, must make even the most thoughtless and indifferent say; “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.”

Reader, The angel of death, though unseen, may be now with you, to deliver his message. His solemn citation, though unheard, may be for to-morrow, but if not, still it is for a day which is fixed and unalterable. Do not dismiss this warning, without consideration, or in the delusion that death is less terrible, the judgment less strict, the issue less important than all these really are. Eternity is at hand. Are you prepared to meet your judge? Be not deluded with the vain hope, that having done many good things, you are not wicked enough to be condemned. Herod did many things, and heard John gladly; but what became of Herod? Judge yourself by no law, but that by which God will judge you, even a strict and holy law. Trust to no mercy, but that which God hath declared to be his peculiar mercy. Consider the very act of having hitherto thought so little of all

that a Redeemer did and suffered, and is still ready to do, to be a great and a grievous sin. His agony was beyond your conception, and although you have lightly esteemed it, yet his entreaties are urgent and kind. Treat his call and his offer no longer with indifference. Say not again to him, go away for this time. Depend not on any future opportunity for repentance. Reject not his mercy. Do for once pray. Stifle not the rising desire, or this call to pray. It is the sure mean of obtaining the spirit of wisdom and sanctification. Perhaps on your yielding to, or resisting this entreaty, may depend the happiness or misery of that soul and body, which shall either live for ever, under the blessing, and in the joy of an accepted Saviour, or under the vengeance of an insulted and rejected God, and the never-ending rage and cruelty of him who rules and torments, in that unquenchable fire in which he himself is tormented and blasphemes. Make now your choice, but do not vainly attempt to serve two masters, or to reconcile the love of sin, and conformity to this world, with the love of God, and the life of faith. There must be no half measures, no divided allegiance, for that is direct rebellion. Two spirits cannot reign in your heart. It cannot be the temple of the Holy Ghost, and also of Satan. God is not to be deceived, for he knows who possesses your heart. Satan is not to be deluded, for he knows that this mixed service, this offer of giving something to God, and keeping something to yourself, is little better than the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. With this state he is quite satisfied, and may, at this moment, be persuading you, that you have given to God all that God can require. He asks you not to deny the excellence of the divine law, but only to take a little latitude with regard to its strictness and spirituality. He allows you to trust to part of Christ's work, provided you will not believe in the

necessity of the whole. He lulls you with the fatal hope, that you may be saved from the punishment, without being delivered from the love and the power of sin; and that although your heart be not changed, yet “ye shall not surely die.”

APPENDIX

TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

WHILST this edition was printing, it has pleased the Father to hear the prayer of the blessed Redeemer, in behalf of my beloved and only daughter, "Father, I will, that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." To-morrow (29th August, 1831), the grave, as a consecrated place of rest, is to receive her mortal remains, in sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection.

Those who knew her intimately will not think it too much, when I say, that she exhibited as endearing a representation of the christian character as frail humanity could well afford. Her gentleness, and kindly disposition, and well-informed mind, made her an agreeable companion to all; but her real worth was chiefly known to Christians. Her benevolence and christian charity were unwearied, though concealed; but the peculiar and most earnest desire of her heart, was to promote the interest of her Redeemer, and, in every way she could, to show good to his people, for his sake. I know not, amongst old or young, one more truly sanctified, and who seemed, long ago, more meet for heaven. In mercy to me and to others, she was spared longer, doubtless, that her progress might be still greater, and her

happiness hereafter accordingly increased; and also, because there might still, perhaps, be some to whom she was to be the instrument of leading to the cross of Christ; and now, even when dead, I believe that to many she yet speaketh.*

I write not this so much from parental feeling, as that others may be benefited by her example, and also to say, that if any have derived the smallest degree, either of instruction or comfort, from this work, it is to her they are indebted, for it was by her urgent entreaty that it ever went beyond the first, and anonymous edition. It may also be a comfort to many drooping spirits to know, that with all her devotedness to Christ, and, I may truly say, apostolic zeal for the good of others, she had herself many seasons of distress and of fear, but always in good time, the light of his countenance shone upon her. Let not, then, any disquieted soul say that God will forsake the work of his hands, or consider a season of distress a mark of his displeasure.

I feel, also, as a reason for adding this Appendix, the duty of giving praise to God, and testifying the truth and stability of his promises, in my own experience, even to the weakest of his disciples. Much tender and affectionate kindness, on the present, and

* For the benefit of those who are, or who may be, in the same situation with myself, I give the conclusion of a letter left for me:—"And now, O my beloved father, may the best blessings of the Lord Jesus ever rest and abide on you. May the consolations of his Holy Spirit support and comfort you, in every situation, and every trial. Rejoice, my beloved father, in the hope, the glorious hope, which is set before you. Earthly comforts may be withdrawn, but the fountain of all comfort is still Jesus. Jesus, the blessed Jesus, ever liveth. He is a friend born for adversity. Trust in him, my dearest father. He will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. That your soul may ever be abundantly satisfied with his love, and ever enjoy his peace, and that we may meet to praise him through eternity, is the earnest prayer of your dear, your affectionate child,

"RACHEL."

former occasions, I have received from my friends; but my solid and permanent consolation is, and has been, from the gracious support of my only Lord and Master. I feel anxious, though in much weakness of faith, and sinfulness of heart, to call on others to trust to him, in every time of need, and to declare the great things that God has done to me, for he has not permitted me to lose my hope and confidence in him. But, from my own thoughts, and the fears which have beset me, I can well believe that many fellow sufferers, though truly convinced of the wisdom and mercy of God, may, from a sense of sin, feel a difficulty of appropriating to themselves, the exceeding great and precious promises of God, and may also look with sad forebodings to the rest of their pilgrimage. Such a one may say, who shall now solace my cares, or share my griefs, or rejoice with me, if I ever again rejoice? who shall tend me when I am sick, or tenderly soothe my dying hours? Alas! I am a solitary being in the wilderness; my habitation is desolate; I am alone, and destitute. O say not so, think not thus, companion in affliction. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; and though one comfort be taken away, he can, out of his abundance, supply all your wants, in a new and different manner, and rest assured he will do so. I have myself lost, not only a dear, and affectionate, and only daughter, but a kind and tried friend, an intimate christian associate, and a prudent and faithful counsellor; but I feel it due to the God who has taken her, to say, that I know, that if I only will keep true to him, he will never forsake me; but will, in his own good way, continue to provide for me in all necessary things, and give whatever is truly good for me. Forgive a father's feelings, when I say, that I shall never forget the sweet voice, and devotional feeling, with which she read to me the 103d Psalm, when I was ill. That

voice which, in death, sweetly called on the blessed Jesus, is now employed in singing the song of Moses, the servant of the Lord, and of the Lamb, and already have her sainted mother and sister, who had gone before her, told her of their past blessedness, and they now, with their other friends, rejoice together, with a joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

I subjoin the conclusion of a sermon, preached in St George's church, by the Rev. Dr Smith, on the Sabbath after the funeral, from Isaiah xxv. 8:—

“To particularize any one christian disciple, in such circumstances, may appear to some as hardly in unison with the public ministrations of religion, how befitting soever for the ear of private friendship. Yet surely, when the observations are intended, not for the questionable purpose of eulogizing the departed, but for instructive reflection to the living: and when, in the character of the deceased, the grace of God our Saviour, was manifested in many of its loveliest and most impressive aspects, the minister of Christ may be permitted to record her obligation to Him who loved her, and washed her from sin in his own blood.

“Prolonged and repeated affliction afforded me the best means of understanding and estimating the principles by which she was governed, and the ground on which her hope of eternal life exclusively rested. And never, brethren, has it been my privilege to witness a more lowly or sainted follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Her understanding, naturally acute and vigorous, and richly cultivated, bowed with intelligent obedience to the doctrine of the cross, as the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation. A spirit, which was the home of gentle affections, and of unwearied benevolence, invariably traced, whatever was good or useful in the creature, to the undeserved mercy of Jehovah.

“There were two striking features in the character of our departed friend (and such friendship seemed a foretaste of heavenly communion) which merit especial notice, because they may encourage others, amidst the weariness and conflicts of their pilgrimage. The one was her peculiar delicacy of conscience; and the other, as its natural fruit, great diffidence in regard to her spiritual state, and her consequent acceptance with God. Her impressions of the divine presence and glory were deep and solemnizing. She felt that sin is exceeding sinful; that it is the heaviest of all earthly burdens; and that deliverance from its guilt and power is to be found only in the blood of the cross, and the grace of the Sanctifier. An hour of communion with God her Saviour, undistracted by the things of time, she valued more highly than the whole world’s felicity. Yet many were her fears, lest she might fail of the promised rest. These proceeded partly from the feebleness of her health, but mainly from her exalted view of the majesty and spotless purity of that God with whom we have to do. It was her solace, however, that she was freely invited to unburden her soul before Him, to be emptied of all creature dependence, and to cleave to Christ, as all her salvation, and all her desire. Her happiest hours were those in which she was enabled, in any measure, to glorify God, and to do good to others. In his servant, now removed, deeds of piety and beneficence were blessed fruits of that faith which worketh by love. The poor and the forgotten were objects of her ceaseless care; and many a case that others knew not, she employed means to seek out. All this was done with a delicacy of feeling which shrunk from the eye of observation, whilst it ministered effectual relief to the indigent and helpless.

“But without transgressing the necessary limits, it is my duty to remark, that wherever the principles

of the gospel are in saving operation, beneficence is an unfailing result. Such beneficence, the fruit of love to Christ, glowed in her heart, as it glows in all who have learned to look, not only at their own things, but also at the things of others. Another feature in the character of genuine disciples, is their desire to fulfil every relative obligation, and in her we beheld a pattern worthy of being imitated.

“ ‘Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.’

“ Let mourning parents repose this day, with increased confidence, on the arm that sustained their beloved children, and let them give thanks unto God, that their parental counsels, and prayers, have been crowned with an abundant reward. Ye fathers and mothers in Israel, be upheld by the animating consideration, that sons and daughters have been born unto God, and that ye shall meet with them in glory, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, and the Lord God shall wipe away tears from all faces. Jehovah, in whom they confided, even in their departing hour, to whom they affectionately committed both their own interests and yours, will never leave you, he will never forsake you. Ye have sown in tears, but ye shall reap in joy.

“ Now, unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you, faultless, before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy. To the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory, and majesty, dominion, and power, both now, and ever. Amen.”

Since the publication of the last edition of this work, it has pleased the Almighty to call hence

another of my family, one who was in the very midst of usefulness, and beloved by all who knew him. To the highest professional attainments* and general cultivation of mind, he added that kindliness of manner, that deep interest in the welfare and comfort of his patients, and that assiduous attention, not merely to the necessities, but to the very wishes of the sick, which endeared him to them as a valued friend. When his skill could not cure, his gentleness and sympathy soothed the sufferer, and gave a solace even in a hopeless case. It was not the rich who alone had the benefit of his aid, but the poor and helpless lost in him a friend and benefactor. In society he was indeed a peacemaker. A fever, caught by attending a poor patient, cut him off in a few days, but the last act of consciousness was lifting up his hand in prayer.

My pew is now empty, and the voices of those who once joined in prayer and praise are heard no more. The worshippers on earth have been removed for purposes wise, both respecting themselves and me, and in this last bereavement, I may add, to the public at large. They are now praising that Redeemer who kept them in the faith here, and in his own good time and way, took them to himself.

* He formed, by his own personal labours, a most valuable and extensive collection of casts and models, illustrative of professional subjects, for the present deposited in the University of Glasgow.

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR,

CHRISTIAN FRAGMENTS,

OR

REMARKS

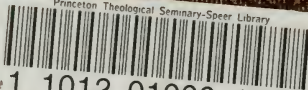
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